

Graduate and Professional Community Initiative 2020

A Strategic Plan for the Graduate and Professional Student Community

Prepared by the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly

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Executive Summary

The Graduate and Professional Community Initiative (GPCI) is a strategic plan presented to Cornell University and the broader Ithaca community by a dedicated group of graduate and professional students. Our goal with this document is to bring attention to issues in graduate and professional student life at Cornell University. We hope this document serves as a guide for the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly (GPSA) and the university administration for years to come.

The graduate and professional student community at Cornell University is extremely diverse. Graduate and professional students perform many roles, including taking and teaching classes, conducting research, and reaching out to the broader community. This community is also one of the most diverse at Cornell, comprising 46.1% international students and 18.9% minority students. With this diversity comes unique needs within different subpopulations, which this strategic plan identifies.

The GPCI was developed in a collaborative way. The GPCI Committee, an ad hoc committee created by the GPSA, worked with the administration and solicited feedback from the greater graduate and professional community to develop actionable items. The GPCI Committee developed eight topics to cover the diverse needs of the graduate and professional community. Each topic area contains strategic action items to recommend steps that Cornell can take to improve the graduate and professional student experience.

Eight Topic Areas

Graduate and Professional Student Center

The GPCI suggests that the Big Red Barn – the Graduate and Professional Student Center – could better serve the graduate and professional student community by enhancing the accessibility of the Big Red Barn by increasing the seating within the Big Red Barn and assessing the ability to provide air conditioning to expand summer hours. Additionally, the GPCI looks to increase the communications around the Big Red Barn so they are disseminated more widely to ensure more students are aware of what is available at the Big Red Barn.

Mental Health and Well-being

The GPCI recognizes that the mental health and well-being of the graduate and professional community is predicated on many factors. Because of this, the GPCI aims to increase support for graduate and professional students to prevent mental health crises from occurring. This involves improving support for graduate and professional students in advisor-advisee relationships, providing access to the fitness centers, and advancing data collection to enhance approaches to improving mental health.

Diversity and Inclusion

While the graduate and professional community is extremely diverse, the GPCI identifies many areas of improvement to better support this community. The GPCI aims to improve diversity and inclusion programming and mental health and increase representation among underrepresented minority groups to enhance recruitment and retention of diverse students. Additionally, the GPCI looks to improve overall campus climate through educational programs, include ability as a measure of diversity, and more broadly recognize the affordability barriers at Cornell.

International Students

Since 46.1% of graduate and professional students are international students, this community deserves special attention. The GPCI aims to improve the experience of these students by providing programming to help students form communities, as well as improving services available to international students to better ease their transition to Cornell and the United States. Additionally, the GPCI aims to recruit and retain international students and faculty to continue to better serve this community.

Transportation

The GPCI aims to improve access to transportation, as well as provide additional alternative transportation options. This involves exploring the opportunity for implementing a campus circulator bus, expanding opportunities for travel outside of Ithaca, and improving parking to reduce congestion.

Students with Families

Students with families are a large subpopulation of the graduate and professional student population with unique needs. The GPCI focuses on providing better access to information for students with families, including through the creation of an online forum. Additionally, the GPCI aims to expand affordable childcare opportunities, as well as provide more support for spouses of students.

Housing

The GPCI assesses the needs of the graduate and professional community in both on-campus and off-campus housing. For those on-campus, the GPCI aims to improve access to internet, as well as expand bus routes to on-campus housing. For those off-campus, the GPCI aims to provide expanded opportunities to form relationships with other students who live off-campus, as well as improve the process of finding off-campus housing.

Sense of Community

Due to the large size and variety of academic interests of the graduate and professional student community, a broad sense of community is often difficult to attain. To ameliorate this, the GPCI aims to promote the theme of "One Cornell", continue and improve both academic and social programming, and expand opportunities to learn about events to expand community at Cornell.

Our Vision

Previous Graduate and Professional Community Initiatives (2008 and 2013) have proven to be successful at providing administration with the framework to implement change on issues affecting the graduate and professional student community. Our goal with this iteration is to continue the success of previous documents as a guide for the University's strategic plan. We hope that the GPSA and Cornell administration view this as a living document to inform policy decisions in the future. The GPCI is a collaborative and strategic plan representing the vision for the GPSA and graduate and professional student at Cornell.

Introduction

What is the Graduate and Professional Community Initiative?

The Graduate and Professional Community Initiative (GPCI) is a strategic plan presented to Cornell University and the greater Ithaca community by the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly to address issues facing Cornell's graduate and professional students. The GPCI outlines these issues and provides an integrated plan to action to ameliorate these challenges. The 2013 GPCI served as a living document and provided guidelines on how the university and GPSA approached student issues. We hope that the 2020 iteration will fulfill similar goals and be updated by future members of the graduate and professional community.

History of the Graduate and Professional Community Initiative

The initial iteration of the Graduate and Professional Community Initiative, the "Vision Statement for a Graduate Community Initiative"¹ (2007 GCI), was presented to the Board of Trustees in March 2007. A working group was formed in response, but the 2007-2008 global recession sidelined efforts as the financial outlook of the university changed drastically. Ultimately, in 2010, the GPSA reviewed the work of the 2007 working group and urged the consideration of graduate and professional student needs in the overall university strategic plan. The 2007 GCI was later referenced in the university strategic plan and remained a blueprint for decisions made by university administrators for years to come.

The collaboration between the university administration and the graduate and professional community continued with the passage of the 2013 Graduate and Professional Community Initiative (2013 GPCI)². The 2013 GPCI continued to serve as a blueprint for university administrators. The Graduate School, under the leadership of Dean Barbara Knuth, has referenced the 2013 document heavily in decisions made for graduate and professional student life. In 2018, the Graduate School released a progress report³ that reported a summary of progress on GPCI-related issues, highlighting important advancements in the quality of graduate and professional life.

¹ <https://news.cornell.edu/stories/2007/07/graduate-community-initiative-seeks-integrated-approach>

² <https://gradschool.cornell.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Graduate-and-Professional-Community-Initiative-2013-GPCI-Funding-VD.pdf>

³ <https://gradschool.cornell.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/GPCI-2013-Progress-as-of-Spring-2018-ACC1419.pdf>

Building off of the success of the 2007 GCI and 2013 GPCI, the GPSA wishes to continue facilitating a collaborative partnership between the graduate and professional community and university administration with a new iteration of the GPCI. Work on the 2020 GPCI began in fall 2018 with the creation of the GPCI Ad-Hoc Committee and included numerous dedicated individuals who worked tirelessly to create their sections. This document represents the work done by the GPSA, GPCI Ad-Hoc Committee, and numerous stakeholders across campus who held town halls, participated in discussions, and provided feedback to help create this important document.

The Process

The GPCI Ad-Hoc Committee was formed on September 10, 2018, at the second GPSA of the academic year⁴. The GPCI Ad-Hoc Committee consisted of graduate and professional students across many fields and at different stages of their education. The committee first worked to determine topic areas of the GPCI and assigned a chair to head efforts of each section. Each chair then analyzed the state of the graduate and professional community within their respective topic area to assess progress made since the 2013 GPCI. To aid in assessing accomplished goals, Dean Barbara Knuth assigned members of the Graduate School administrative team to each topic area.

To obtain input from the graduate and professional community, both online and in-person fora were used. A town hall was held in the Fall of 2019 after the first draft of the 2020 GPCI was presented to the public. Some topic area chairs chose to hold Dine & Discuss events to talk about specific issues, including mental health. Finally, all members of the graduate and professional community had the opportunity to provide feedback via an online form on the Office of the Assemblies website. Ultimately, we received feedback from hundreds of graduate and professional students.

The 2020 GPCI was shared with the GPSA on multiple occasions to facilitate discussion and present goals to constituents. Additionally, topic area chairs regularly met with administrators to discuss the goals outlined in the document to ensure that they were able to both impact the community and could realistically be accomplished. The final document was compiled and presented to the GPSA for approval via resolution⁵.

⁴ https://assembly.cornell.edu/sites/default/files/2018-09-10_gpsa_minutes_final-amended.pdf

⁵ https://assembly.cornell.edu/sites/default/files/resolution_8_-_a_resolution_to_adopt_the_graduate_and_professional_community_initiative.pdf

Graduate and Professional Student Center

Objectives

Objective 1: Enhance the operation and accessibility of the Big Red Barn to better foster both academic and social interactions among graduate and professional students

Rationale: Similar to the previous GPCI document, this objective is still standing as an on-going long-term goal. The Big Red Barn is under new leadership and many changes are expected to happen in the coming years to elevate the usage of the Big Red Barn and improve the students' experience at the center. One of the main goals is to increase graduate and professional students' usage of the Big Red Barn. The following are some actions to help maintain this objective.

Actions:

- a. Support the operation of the BRB Advisory Board. The BRB Advisory is led by the management of the BRB and includes BRB management and staff, Cornell dining and GPSA representatives. GPSA will continue to designate two graduate/professional student representatives every year to serve on the BRB Advisory Board.
- b. Continue supporting the Big Red Barn with funding for maintenance and building upgrades as needed.
- c. Upgrade the seating area
 - i. Increase the number of indoor tables and seats at the Big Red Barn.
- d. Support the Big Red Barn in examining cooling down systems to make the building's temperature more comfortable during hot weather
- e. Increase operating hours of the barn to include weekends (during Fall and Spring)
 - i. Create a committee to explore what the Big Red Barn could provide during the summer in terms of services, programming and operating hours
- f. Increase operating hours of the barn to include summers
 - i. Create a committee to explore what the Big Red Barn could provide during the summer in terms of services, programming and operating hours.
 - i. *Summer 2019 was the first summer in which the BRB was operational. To ensure that the BRB is open in future summer, the GPSA will continue to support the BRB in maintaining and expanding their summer operating hour.*

Objective 2: Increase the visibility and usage of the Big Red Barn amongst graduate and professional students.

Rationale: The Big Red Barn hosts and/or create s a multitude of events and programming. Moreover, the Big Red Barn space serves as a free physical space resource for graduate students and organizations to host events. Some students might not be aware of these things;

therefore, it is essential to continue promoting the Big Red Barn's space, events and programming.

Actions:

- a. Include the Big Red Barn in newsletter and mass communication.
- b. Assist the Big Red Barn in promoting events and programming.
- c. Encourage graduate and professional student organization to use the Big Red Barn for meetings and events.
- d. Offer incentives to organizations when hosting programming at the Big Red Barn.

Mental Health and Well-being

Introduction

Graduate and professional student mental health and well-being at Cornell continue to be in crisis. A recent study found that graduate trainees are more than six times as likely to experience depression and anxiety in comparison with the general population. Internal data collected from the 2019 Doctoral Experience survey found that 30% and 50% of participants reported mental health and loneliness/social isolation respectively as obstacles to their academic success in the last year. The 2013 - 2018 GPCI called for increased mental health and physical resources to support graduate and professional students in both managing work-related stress and developing meaningful relationships. Although the university has increased these resources since 2013, we persist in requesting increased offerings for graduate and professional students in particular, who often feel that their needs are subordinate to those of the undergraduate student population.

This section details three areas we feel are critical to advancing graduate and professional student mental health and well-being. This includes advancing the quality of and support for graduate advisor-advisee relationships, as both data collected from the doctoral experience survey identifies and anecdotally indicates that this is a major influencer of student health. Similarly, it calls for improving the accessibility of physical health resources for graduate and professional students. Physical health and mental health are deeply intertwined and investment in this area is key to supporting student well-being. Finally, an influx of programming and resources have been developed since 2013 to support student well-being, and we call for the expansion of this programming to better support community needs.

Objectives

Objective 1: Improve support for graduate advisor-advisee relationships

Rationale: The 2019 Doctoral Experience Survey found that 30% of graduate trainees reported their relationship with their adviser as an obstacle to their academic success, and, despite our best efforts, this number has remained unchanged since the 2013 Doctoral Experience Survey. The Graduate and Professional Student Assembly Student Advocacy Committee held a Dine & Discuss event in 2018 on graduate and professional student mental health and heard several stories from current students clarifying not only how crucial the advisor-advisee relationship is to success but also how detrimental it can be when these relationships become strained. Zooming out to broader graduate education landscape, a recent study found that graduate trainees with anxiety and depression were consistently more likely to be critical of their relationship with their advisor, including more often stating that they did not believe their advisor positively impacted their emotional or mental well being.

Our expectation is not to limit the diverse range of productive and positive mentoring styles, but instead to set expectations for and improve communication between both parties. The action items listed below highlight a variety of ways to do this.

Actions:

- a. Enforce education on and usage of the new Student Progress Report (SPR) system and incorporate additional confidential questions for graduate students regarding the advisor-advisee relationship to get a better sense of the true nature of the dynamic and information on where to seek support if needed
- b. When advisee-advisor relationships are established, a formalized meeting to discuss initial expectations should be held. The content of this meeting should include, but is not limited to: frequency of in-person meetings, best forms of communication, coursework load, approximate timeline of key milestones in the program (coursework, thesis proposal, A exam, B exam, number of publications expected before graduation, etc).
- c. Distribute a student-written document to onboard incoming graduate students on how to not only choose an advisor but also identify both good and bad advising dynamics and additional mentors outside of the committee
- d. Consistently distribute resources to faculty regarding best advising practices, including but not limited to the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly's Best Practices for Faculty Advising Document
- e. Mandate training that equips faculty with best practices for managing and mentoring students, avoiding or resolving conflict, and sensitizing them to the needs of particular student communities, including students from underrepresented minority groups, international students, students with disabilities, and students with families
- f. Facilitate discussions between DGS's and faculty champions with their fellow faculty members on their role in supporting the well-being and success of graduate students. This includes encouraging attendance of Notice and Respond training and programming offered by the Center for Teaching Innovation.
- g. Institutionalize graduate student feedback when selecting a field's DGS, as the DGS is often responsible for mitigating toxic advisor-advisee relationships. A DGS must have the trust of the graduate students in order to effectively fulfill this role, so actively seeking graduate student input on candidates is key in finding a successful DGS.
- h. Increase support for graduate students that are actively in conflict with advisor in the following ways:
 - i. Hold the DGS and GFA of each field accountable to meet the minimum requirements of their role set by the Graduate School
 - ii. Consistently educate graduate students about the diversity of resources/services available to them in managing this conflict. This includes the DGS and GFA in their field, the Ombudsman's Office, the Graduate School, and more.

Objective 2: Improve graduate and professional student access to physical well-being, recreation, and fitness

Rationale: The connection between mental and physical health is well-established, and Cornell's graduate and professional students cite physical exercise as the most common way they combat work-related stress. However, many barriers exist that limit their ability to exercise regularly. These include costs, limited hours, decentralized facilities, limited transportation and parking, poor quality or quantity of equipment, inaccessibility, and overcrowding. Very little progress has been made in meeting objectives detailed in the 2013 GPCI related to improving the physical fitness of graduate and professional students. We reiterate and expand upon our calls in 2013 to advance the physical fitness of our graduate and professional students as a mechanism for supporting their mental health.

Actions:

- a. Include the building of a large, centralized fitness center and constructing more fields specifically for club sports usage into the campus strategic plan; this will ensure that gathering the funding—and other necessary resources to make any project of significant scale and cost happen—will be prioritized
- b. Until then, work with existing Cornell fitness centers as well as community fitness centers to get Cornell graduate and professional students joint or low-cost memberships
- c. Improve hours of fitness centers on evenings, weekends, and breaks, particularly during summer and winter breaks when graduate and professional often remain on campus
- d. Reinstate gym membership reimbursement, as also urged by the JED Foundation
- e. Offer fitness and outdoor recreation courses and events specifically targeted to graduate and professional students year-round
- f. Improve communication of hours and any cancellations for all on-campus facilities. These should be clearly posted online as quickly as possible and shared with graduate and professional students via the Big Red Rec listserv
- g. Continue and consider expanding the “late night special” offer of free gym entry to graduate and professional students during less busy hours such as evenings and weekends
- h. Coordinate TCAT lines for Cornell Fitness Centers and Cornell Health
- i. Continue to encourage graduate and professional students to serve on the student health benefits committee and heed the committee's recommendations
- j. Increase support services offered by SDS to meet student needs both inside and outside of the classroom
- k. Allow students to request an interpreter, captionist, or translator when scheduling appointments online using myCornellHealth
- l. Increase lighting on campus for all street crossings and commonly used walkways, sidewalks, and stairs; and work with officials in the community to improve lighting near TCAT bus stops and on routes walked by students
- m. Have more interdisciplinary graduate and professional social events that are centered on physical components such as yoga, swimming, and climbing, rather than drinking

- n. Make the Lindseth climbing center more inclusive for diverse graduate and professional students and consider funding their Adaptive Climbing Initiative Course Proposal

Objective 3: Improve programming, resources, and healthcare that can ameliorate overall graduate and professional student mental well-being and prevent mental health crises

Rationale: Programming and resources housed in both Cornell Health and Graduate School provide invaluable support for graduate and professional students. Concerns about the accessibility and quality of care provided by Cornell Health to graduate students persist however and must be addressed to improve graduate and professional student health.

Both graduate and professional students surveyed in 2017 state that they are not receiving adequate guidance or instruction on personal skills (such as time management and financial awareness) that are critical for success. Doctoral students also report that they are not receiving enough training in critical skills for academic success such as writing skills necessary to complete their dissertation or funding proposals. This perhaps explains why in the 2019 Doctoral Experience Survey 62% of respondents reported their self-confidence and 47% reported the current job market as obstacles to their success.

While programming has improved since the 2013 GPCI, we reiterate here the value of these programs and the need for their maintenance and expansion. This includes programming housed in both Cornell Health, the Graduate School, and other units on campus.

Actions:

- a. Support Skorton Initiatives for mental health and develop a Peer-to-Peer (P2P) Notice & Respond Training specifically for graduate and professional students
- b. Expand existing Let's Talk resources by providing hours and locations that meet the needs of graduate and professional student populations both on and off campus (such as expanding hours and locations to the vet school, Cornell AgriTech, and Cornell Tech and/or using telehealth videoconferencing technologies)
- c. Hire more CAPS counselors to be able to meet the rising demand for one-on-one counseling on-campus
- d. Mandate training for CAPS staff to learn skills on how to effectively support diverse students including but not limited to students of color, students from diverse class backgrounds, international students, LGBTQ+ students, and students with disabilities
- e. Increase access to on-campus psychiatrists and necessary medication
- f. Carefully manage off-campus referrals by following up with students about their ability to find off-campus care due to cost, transportation, mobility, and scheduling
- g. Increase programming that targets personal skills such as time management, organization, resilience, relationships, and finances
- h. Increase programming that targets professional skills such as how to write a dissertation, manuscript, or funding proposal

- i. Increase support and funding to career services specifically for graduate and professional students to help them navigate the job market and mitigate the stress associated with finding a job
- j. Ensure all Graduate Teaching Assistants receive robust training on identifying signs of mental distress, communicating with their students about their mental health, and connecting students in need with appropriate university services.
- k. Establish committees within the professional schools consisting of faculty, students, and staff to investigate the impact course load has on student mental health and to develop strategies to mitigate these effects for each professional program on all of Cornell's campuses.

Objective 4: Advance data-collection, communication, and programming regarding substance abuse within the graduate and professional student communities

Rationale: Information regarding the number of graduate and professional students dealing with substance abuse is minimal at best. A survey in 2014 of students in fifteen law schools across the country found that “roughly one-quarter to one-third of respondents reported frequent binge drinking or misuse of drugs”. Similarly, a 2015 study of veterinary students finds that approximately half of respondents engaged in episodes of binge drinking. Institutionally, we lack information regarding the level of substance abuse within our own graduate and professional student communities. Students suffering from substance abuse may be hesitant to express this and to seek help due to social stigma and a fear that this will negatively impact their ability to secure a job.

These action items are designed to help the university assess the level of substance abuse within the graduate and professional student communities and to create programming to help students who are struggling with it.

Actions:

- a. Develop and distribute a survey to enrolled graduate and professional students inquiring about their usage of alcohol, marijuana, and other substances
- b. Distribute information and create programming to combat common misconceptions about the consequences of help seeking behavior on job seeking or admission into professional organizations
- c. Create sober programming to help build community between graduate and professional students recovering from substance abuse
- d. Develop group counseling opportunities within Cornell Health specifically for graduate and professional students seeking help recovering from substance abuse

Diversity and Inclusion

Introduction

In making the statement “I would found an institution where any person could find instruction in any study” Ezra Cornell laid a foundation for diversity and inclusion that Cornell University takes pride in to this day. The fact is, however, that reality does not always live up to this ideal. There are still many barriers to equitable access to a Cornell graduate or professional education that disproportionately affect students from certain social identity groups that have been marginalized in our society and institutions of higher education.

The 2013 GPCI summarized how the graduate and professional student body was the most diverse of Cornell’s student bodies, with 46.1% international students and 18.9% of domestic students self-identifying as members of a minority group in the most recent report from the Office of Institutional Research and Planning¹. Strategic planning is crucial to meeting the diverse needs of this community. It was made clear in the 2013 GPCI and is still clear today that the GPSA should aim to increase the diversity of its membership, engage in more outreach, and give additional consideration and resources to support international students, students of color, students with disabilities, gender minorities, and low income and first generation graduate and professional students. We recognize the establishment of the Diversity and International Students Committee (DISC) as a standing committee of the GPSA as a major accomplishment of the 2013 GPCI process. DISC has been an active and productive group, leveraging collaborations with students, faculty, staff, and administration to provide advocacy and support for students from historically marginalized groups, and to develop educational and community-building programs for allies.

Since 2013, the Graduate School has also taken measures to improve support for graduate and professional students from underrepresented minority groups through the creation of the Office of Inclusion and Student Engagement (OISE) and increased programming to aid student success and create a culture of inclusion. Furthermore, seven additional graduate and professional student groups have been formed (CLASS, DISC, GWiS, MAC, QGrads (formerly oSTEM), GPSI, and FiGLI) and joined BGPSA, IGSA, LGSC, and SAAGA to form the Graduate and Professional Student Diversity Council (GPSDC). The GPSDC continues to work closely with OISE to advocate for students from underrepresented backgrounds and build community through joint initiatives and signature programming including the annual Renaissance Ball and the Spring Recognition Banquet.

While we appreciate the progress that has been made over the past five years, there are also several issues raised in the 2013 GPCI that have yet to be fully addressed. We note here that for many of the following issues the GPSA or Graduate School has taken some form of action; however, for many we are unable to quantify any progress due to a lack of data on measurable outcomes. We have attempted to include several of these items in this updated document with more specific and measurable goals so that progress can be evaluated in the future. Specifically we have identified the following issues from the 2013 GPCI that require our continued attention:

- Increased representation of a diversity of student perspectives in the GPSA membership
- Increased transparency and coordination of GPSA initiatives within and between officers and members through monthly Operations Committee meetings
- Increased communication with graduate and professional student Registered Student Organizations, particularly those that serve underrepresented or historically marginalized communities
- Expanded professional development and career resources for international students
- Increased support focused on the unique mental health needs of international students and students from underrepresented backgrounds
- Increased access to resources related to language barriers affecting coursework, teaching, and research
- Additional support programming for international students, focusing on financial literacy, international job search challenges, and advisor-advisee relationships
- Establishment of localized diversity and inclusion initiatives, including structured leadership and accountability mechanisms, at the department level across the university
- Increased resources for existing resource centers (i.e. Women's Resource Center, Asian and Asian-American Center, and LGBT Resource Center) to provide services and programming specific to graduate and professional students
- Creation of resource centers or similar units or mechanisms to provide community and support for groups that are currently lacking them (i.e. students with disabilities and Black, Latinx, indigenous, and first generation/low income students)
- Identifying and addressing cultural and social adjustments faced by first-gen students.
- Efforts to improve communication about the bias reporting systems and other venues for recourse when students are experience bias or are harassed based on their identity

Objective 1: Recruitment and retention of graduate and professional students from a diversity of backgrounds

Rationale: Cornell has made great efforts to increase diversity and representation within doctoral programs and professional schools. However, there are still populations that are historically underrepresented in these fields. Across Doctoral, Professional Master's and Research Master's programs, US underrepresented minority and US other minority admissions and enrollment have not increased significantly between 2013-2017 when viewed as a percentage of the total; absolute numbers are increasing by a small amount each year. When viewing makeup of the graduate school and professional students since Fall 2010, in both categories there are about 10% more male students enrolled although this gap has been closing in recent years. The percentage of US underrepresented minority students has decreased slightly in the professional schools and remained steady in the graduate school. Attrition percent between 2004-2012 is higher for underrepresented minority doctoral students compared to the average of all doctoral attrition percents.

While we acknowledge the large effort Cornell has put into recruitment of diverse graduate students, such as the Graduate School Ambassador program, we believe that these efforts could still be expanded. Additionally, we believe that increasing inclusive areas of support for underrepresented students at Cornell may improve retention rates and student

success, which could also help increase recruitment rates of students from diverse backgrounds. We acknowledge the Office of Inclusion and Student engagement for the support of many identity organizations on campus for graduate and professional students that serve these communities; however, some organizations could also benefit from additional and specific institutionalized support.

Actions:

- a. Continued support to the Ambassador program within the Graduate School to recruit students from underrepresented and diverse backgrounds.
- b. Expand, with necessary institutional funding and support, the Diversity Preview Weekend or similar programs to improve recruitment of students from underrepresented and diverse backgrounds to all Graduate Fields.
- c. Standardize graduate student admissions committee operations across all fields by:
 - i. Requiring admissions committee members to participate in training on holistic review of applications and implicit bias
 - ii. Including current graduate students on admissions committees
 - iii. Providing all admissions committees with standardised criteria/rubrics for student selection designed to prevent implicit bias or other biasing factors
- d. Work with members of the Black, LatinX, Indigenous, and first generation/low income graduate and professional student communities to create resource centers or otherwise leverage existing programs (e.g. Latino Studies and American Indian and Indigenous Studies Programs) to provide community and other forms of support specific to their communities' needs.
- e. Expand funding and staff support for Graduate and Professional Student-specific programming, spaces and resources within the current Resource Centers.
- f. Increase support to Student Disability Services to allow for programs specific to Graduate & Professional Students such as inclusive TA accommodation trainings, research accommodations, and training for advisors.
- g. Hire mental health professionals trained specifically to support the needs of graduate and professional students and ensure there is representation of racial, ethnic, and cultural minorities among these new hires
- h. Provide career services and support specific to graduate and professional students including:
 - i. Dedicated career services staff to support graduate and professional students interested in academic, private, and public sector careers
 - ii. Career fairs comprised of employers that are looking to hire recent graduates with graduate and professional degrees
 - iii. Career fairs that take into account the additional employment requirements, such as visa restrictions, for international students looking for careers in the United States.

Objective 2: Improvement of Campus Climate for Diversity and Inclusion

Rationale: Cornell has been taking steps to analyze and improve the campus climate throughout the university, including the Presidential Task Force on Campus Climate during the Spring 2018 semester. Racially charged incidents on campus, and the administration's response, indicate the need for further improvement with more direct action to combat such incidents. This has already been echoed by the list of demands presented to President Pollack by representatives of underrepresented graduate and professional students.

We advocate for resources to improve campus climate across all axes of diversity, including but not limited to: race; ethnicity; nationality; religion or creed; sexual orientation; gender identity; age; physical, mental and psychological ability; and socioeconomic status and/or background. We believe that increased awareness of the challenges faced by underrepresented/marginalized identity groups, as well as improved institutionalized support for such groups, will lead to a more inclusive campus and Cornell community. We acknowledge the work of the Graduate School Office of Inclusion and Student Engagement, Diversity Programs in Engineering, and the Intergroup Dialogue Project for their ongoing efforts to improve campus climate and suggest expanding and replicating their models for educational and social programming to reach more of the graduate and professional student body..

Actions:

- a. Development of Diversity and Inclusion committees comprised of faculty, staff, and graduate students within every Graduate Field, tasked with identifying and addressing barriers to inclusion with that field at the local level.
- b. Action 2. Create training programs on creating inclusive teaching and research environments to be offered to Teaching Assistants, Research Assistants, Postdoctoral Associates, Faculty Advisors, and Directors of Graduate Studies. These programs should.
 - i. Tie these programs into the Belonging at Cornell initiative
 - ii. Utilize tools from the Intergroup Dialogue Project and OISE's My Voice, My Story program to engage participants in diverse, face-to-face group settings.
 - iii. Be supplemented by online, asynchronous training resources, such as the Center for Teaching Innovation's successful Teaching and Learning in the Diverse Classroom course, to support community members that are unable to attend trainings in person.
 - iv. Increase funding and staff support for the Graduate School Office of Inclusion and Student Engagement and the Intergroup Dialogue Project for increased capacity to provide these services.
- c. Uphold the Title IX policy guidance of 2011 and 2014.
- d. Action 4. Develop and implement clear avenues of recourse to any policies written to address bias, harassment, and oppression on campus, taking into account potential power dynamics between students, faculty, and staff.

Objective 3: Accessibility

Rationale: (Dis)ability is diversity, and without acknowledging this fact, increasing awareness of the diversity in ability that exists among graduate and professional students, and striving to make our campus seamlessly accessible to all of those students we are failing in our efforts to

make Cornell an inclusive space. Approximately 1 billion people around the world, or about 15% of the global population, live with disabilities every day. This makes people with disabilities the largest minority group in the world, and it is also one of the few marginalized identities that any person can become a part of at any time. There is evidence that people with disabilities, particularly those suffering from mental health issues, are subject to significant stigma and bias in higher education and the broader workforce. In higher education the potential for stigmatization and students' knowledge and perception of available services are known to be barriers to students taking advantage of services and accommodations⁹. The Student Disabilities Services (SDS) office is a phenomenal resource to Cornell students that identify as having a disability but it does not have the resources to tackle many issues that exist around ability and accessibility on its own. We believe that there is enormous potential for collaboration between the GPSA, SDS, the Graduate School and Professional Schools, and other campus stakeholders to increase awareness of disability and improve access for graduate and professional students at Cornell.

Actions:

- a. Perform physical accessibility audits to identify facilities used by graduate or professional students in need of renovation including buildings, classrooms, libraries, office spaces, lab spaces, shared/common spaces, and field stations.
- b. Perform web accessibility audits to identify gaps in ADA compliance for all online resources – this is already fairly good
- c. Increase messaging to graduate and professional students during orientation and other first year programming regarding services and accommodations available through SDS.
- d. Work with SDS to develop systems to gather data, identify stress points, and develop solutions to improve the processes by which graduate and professional students request and receive accommodations.
- e. Partner with the Graduate School, the Law School, the College of Veterinary Medicine, and the SC Johnson College of Business, to assure that appropriate mechanisms for feedback and accountability are in place to ensure that accommodations are provided and that faculty & staff are educated on what is available and how to facilitate access.
- f. Collaborate with SDS and others to provide messaging and programming intended to increase awareness of ability as a social identity and promote knowledge of how to facilitate accessibility among the graduate and professional student populations

Objective 4: Affordability

Rationale: One of the most greatest barriers to higher education is affordability. At all levels enrollment and completion rates are significantly lower for individuals from lower family income brackets, and these gaps widen at highly selective institutions such as Cornell. Students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds not only face a greater challenge than their more affluent peers in paying for tuition, course materials, and living expenses, but may also need to overcome additional, cumulative disadvantages related to financial inequality such as less time to dedicate to schoolwork due to the need to work for supplemental income, or the inability to

take advantage of opportunities to attend conferences, participate in internships, or enroll at more expensive private schools.

Data from internal surveys conducted by the Cornell Graduate School and the Office of Institutional Research & Planning show that there are areas where students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may be underserved. While across all disciplines doctoral students from low-income and working class backgrounds report equal or higher ratings of academic, student life, and overall experiences than their wealthier peers, this relationship is flipped for students in humanities and social sciences disciplines that typically have less access to funding.

Actions:

- a. Increase the number of recruitment and completion fellowships in support of diversity for PhD students.
- b. Add fellowships in support of diversity for research master's and professional degree students.
- c. Increase the number and dollar amount of conference travel grants graduate students can receive and remove the requirement of an oral or poster presentation to receive funding.
- d. Expand messaging regarding financial aid and affordability to prospective students, specifically targeting first generation students, URM students, and students indicating financial barriers to attendance.
- e. Create mechanisms to financially support professional degree students in their professional development (e.g. conference or workshop attendance, internship support, job fairs/networking events) to the same extent as research degree students.
- f. Evaluate the affordability of housing for graduate and professional students on campus and develop plans to both ensure that on-campus housing is affordable for students on graduate assistantships and to increase housing supply to meet demand.
- g. Create an emergency / unexpected expense fund using student activity fee money similar to the undergraduate Student Assembly's "Students Helping Students" fund.
- h. Provide support for the Graduate School to raise funds for these initiatives through Alumni Affairs and Development.

International Students

Introduction

As of Fall 2018, 48.5% of all graduate students and 32% of all professional students were international, and these numbers have been steadily increasing. That's over 3600 graduate and professional students from 116 different countries represented in the Cornell student body. Despite their large presence there are few support services, outside of the Office of Global learning, geared towards addressing the unique concerns of international students. Further, there is a distinct lack of effort in considering the international student experience in strategic administrative decisions at Cornell. Finally, there is a monolithic view of international students when in reality there is a spectrum of widely-varied experiences amongst the international student body. Further, one must be cautious about using a US centric lens and understanding of diversity to describe the international student experience.

The 2013 GPCI document accounted for international students, domestic students of colour and LGBTQ+ students within the same section. The first objective of the document called for the creation of the Diversity and International Student Committee (DISC) which was successful. The document called for increased support structures for international students with four specific action items related to career resources, mental health, challenges with English as a second language and programming related to cultural differences. While Cornell and The Graduate School has implemented a number of action items since 2013, a majority of these have been focused on domestic students. In regards to international students, an important developments since the 2013 GPCI is the creation of the English Language Support Office (ELSO). ELSO has been extremely successful with participation in their programs rising from 465 students/yr in 2016 to 2001 students in 2017. The office, under the direction of Michelle Cox, runs twelve credit-bearing half-semester courses; a robust peer tutoring program that provides individual consultations on writing, presentations, and pronunciation; a bi-weekly series of 90-minute workshops; and an innovative conversation program that brings together community volunteers with international graduate and professional students for weekly "speaking group" meetings. However, much needs to be done, as is outlined in this chapter.

Objectives

Objective 1: Improve resources available to international students during their orientation period.

Rationale: For many international students, the beginning of their graduate career at Cornell is also their introduction to the US. Even for those students who have prior experience with American culture, starting a graduate degree in a new country is a difficult and confusing process. Currently, all international graduate and professional students are required to attend

the International Student Orientation. However, one three hour orientation cannot rectify all possible issues faced by incoming international students. It should also not be assumed that all incoming international students have the same experiences. For some, the cultural differences might be insignificant while for others this might be an enormous cultural shift. Cornell needs to have flexible orientation programs that addresses student concerns across the spectrum of diversity and experience. Some incoming international students, for whom studying in the US might be an extremely large cultural shift, might be interested in a more formal, long-term mentorship program while others might require minimal assistance.

Actions:

- a. Have the Office of Global Learning (OGL), in partnership with the Graduate and Professional Students International (GPSI) and International Student Union (ISU), coordinate an informal, voluntary transition program for all incoming international students. Offer this support before students arrive on campus since most students need mentoring well before their arrival.
 - i. i. Have the OGL create and coordinate a platform for incoming international students that allows them to connect with current international students and resolve any queries related to living and studying in Ithaca, including for issues related to housing, bank accounts, financial stuff, etc.
 - ii. ii. Following the examples of student organizations like Cornell India Association and the Argentine and Uruguayan Friends at Cornell, connect incoming international students with volunteers who can, for example, coordinate rides from the airport or inspect housing options when required.
- b. Create a formal, application-based mentorship program, in partnership with GPSI, for interested first-year graduate and professional international students.
 - i. i. Fund a formal mentorship program for incoming international students that apply for the same. Some degree of pre-selection might be required depending on the funding and the number of students applying to be mentors.
 - ii. ii. The program should include Academic 101 workshops that cover the intricacies of the US academic system, including auditing classes, add-drop dates etc. These workshops should be open to the general international student body.
 - iii. iii. The program should also include dinners or other suitable bonding retreats for mentors and mentees, allowing incoming students to connect with current students and the greater Cornell community.
 - iv. Ensure that mentors in the program are suitably compensated, through a combination of monetary and professional recognition/certificates.
- c. Work with the ISU and GPSI to create and regularly update an International Graduate Student Survival Guide. This should include accurate and updated information of the various international/cultural groups present on campus and their contact information for easy share and dissemination to new members seeking affinity or just exploring.
- d. Besides greater involvement of international student organizations, the International Student Orientation should ensure involvement from resource centers and other support offices.

- i. i. This specifically includes the LGBT Resource Center as differences in attitudes and acceptance levels in different countries might prevent international students from reaching out themselves.
- ii. ii. This also includes Student Disability Service as international students might not be aware of the range of accommodations available to students with disabilities.
- iii. iii. Cornell Health is also extremely important because cultural stigmas might prevent students from reaching out in regard to mental health or sexual health issues. International students might also be unfamiliar with the American health care system and an overview of available care and insurance options is crucial for incoming students.

Objective 2: Improve support services for international students at Cornell

Rationale: While Cornell does offer various support services for all graduate students, there isn't enough awareness of the fact that international students often have a different set of needs and experiences that affects all aspects of their lives. This is not limited to support only on campus but also outside of Cornell. As the current political climate in the United States becomes harsher to immigrants, the international student community at Cornell may be faced with difficulties off-campus - at airports, while travelling or while simply living in the Ithaca community. Currently, there is little to no support offered to international students in these circumstances. On-campus support services that are specifically aimed at international students need to gather feedback from international students on their efficacy and reorient if necessary. On-campus general support services need to make sure that they are addressing the needs of the international student population.

Actions:

- a. The International Teaching Assistant Assessment is required of all international teaching assistants. Students teaching in their first year are all required to participate in the International Teaching Assistant Summer Program while those students that do not meet the required levels of English proficiency assessment are required to attend the International Teaching Assistant Program (ITAP).
 - i. A comprehensive review of the program is needed to ensure that the program is achieving its goals and benefitting both TAs and their students. Restructuring of the program might be necessary to be more sensitive to the needs of international students.
 - ii. While the focus on TA training is appreciated, the fact that this only required for international students and not domestic students (irrespective of prior teaching experience) is biased and appears condescending. After all, if an international student has been admitted through potential to be successful in a graduate program taught in English, then they have the basic language tools for their education. This requirement to attend ITAP is so they can serve Cornell's educational mission, one that many TAs are ill-equipped for. Therefore, uniquely

- requiring international TAs to be trained is discriminatory and adds to the existing burden of adapting to a new environment.
- iii. International students should have the ability to waive this requirement if they're from an institution where English was the primary language of instruction. There should also be opportunities to appeal this requirement on a case by case basis, especially if students go through an equivalent department specific training.
 - iv. Since the programming is aimed at a wide audience, it is actually less practical since teaching styles and class structures vary across disciplines. A focus on more practical aspects of teaching at Cornell - such as a focus on the differences in academic systems or a discussion on academic integrity or plagiarism would be more useful.
 - v. The four-day summer program is also very intense for incoming international students and students might be better served if the program were shortened or spread across the first few weeks of the semester.
- b. Continue to support and fund the English Language Support Office (ELSO). ELSO's successful programming is an excellent example of supporting both English as a second language (ESL) students as well as international students unfamiliar with the American style of writing and speaking. Their programs focus on feedback to the students as opposed to assessments.
- i. Increase funding to ELSO, enabling the office to hire more tutors. ELSO tutors offer feedback to students on writing, presentations and pronunciations. These services are well used and their popularity has led to an increase in the number of waitlisted appointments.
 - ii. The popularity of ELSO's 7-week courses is clearly demonstrated in the increased number of students as well as the increase in number of students waitlisted for each course. Additional funding will enable ELSO to hire additional lecturers thus increasing the number of course sections on offer.
 - iii. Increased funding could also enable ELSO to offer summer support for international graduate and professional students. With funding, they'd be able to offer summer courses, tutoring, workshops, and even an intensive English and culture program for arriving international students, so that they may become more fluent speakers and writers, more familiar with US academic culture, and more familiar with Cornell and Ithaca before their programs start in August.
 - iv. Increased funding could also enable increased programming, especially in the form of their workshops which are well attended and appreciated.
- c. Make emergency funds available for international students who are in need of financial assistance.
- i. The Graduate School grants emergency funding (for non-medical emergencies) upto \$1000 for all domestic students but specifically excludes international students (<https://personalfinance.cornell.edu/2016/01/15/emergency-funds/>).

- ii. This discrepancy needs to be addressed by either making Graduate School Emergency Funds available to all graduate students or ensuring that the OGL will offer emergency funding comparable to the Graduate School.
- d. Offer legal assistance for international students in need by hiring staff with legal training or working in conjunction with the Cornell Law School.
 - i. Dealing with legal issues is always difficult, but legal scenarios become even more complicated when considering international students. International students often face greater challenges than their domestic counterparts since their legal troubles are further muddled due to immigration status. Given the current political climate, it becomes even more necessary that Cornell takes steps to protecting their international student community - physically and legally.
 - ii. Either hire staff, or partner with legal advisors in the Ithaca community, capable of offering legal assistance to international students, potentially in issues of immigration, tax support or exploitative renting for example, when necessary.
 - iii. Currently some clinics at the Cornell Law School offer free legal advice for members of the larger Tompkins County community (<https://www.lawschool.cornell.edu/Clinical-Programs/lgbtclinic/for-potential-clients.cfm>; <https://www.lawschool.cornell.edu/Clinical-Programs/entrepreneurship-clinic/Home.cfm>). Depending on the expertise of staff and students at the Cornell Law School, as well as program requirements for the students, a similar clinic offering legal advice for the international community could be established.
 - iv. The Office of Global Learning must also provide support for students in challenging circumstances. These might include international students who are refugees, who have been deported or are in imminent threat of deportation. This also includes offering robust responses to circumstances such as the 2017 Travel Ban or the 2020 pandemic crises.

Objective 3: Improve campus climate for international students.

Rationale: One of the primary themes of conversation with international students was a crippling sense of isolation. Many students discussed feeling depressed and alone, adversely affecting their ability to achieve their professional and academic goals. Cultural stigmas associated with mental health in many international communities impede many of them from reaching out to Cornell Health for counselling. Mental Health has been an important topic of discussion at Cornell and is a vital section of the GPCI as well. However, conversations on mental health need to acknowledge that international students often approach mental health differently from American students and their experience and feedback needs to be taken into account when discussing the impact of proposed changes to mental health services provided by Cornell.

While the conversation on mental health is crucial, we need to plan to intervene before the need for counselling is reached. Work needs to be done on creating social support structures for international students and for encouraging a close-knit international community at Cornell. While the Office of Global Learning does attempt to organize some programs for international students to gather and meet (such as the International Coffee Hour), their programming is fairly limited and not widely advertised. Another important approach to combating the social isolation faced by international students is to break down barriers between domestic and international students. A lot of domestic students are often ignorant of many nationalities, cultures and religions beyond their own. This can lead to 'othering' of international students.

Actions:

- a. Collect data on the international student experience with regards to mental health and well-being in the Cornell community to understand the unique challenges of the community. This information can further be used to determine gaps in services for international students as well as develop programming. Preliminary data does exist in the Doctoral Experience Survey but this does not take into account the full spectrum of international student experience.
- b. Hire mental health professionals with diverse, international backgrounds for CAPS.
 - i. It is impossible to cover the breadth of all international students' experience at Cornell. However, more staff needs to be hired that are equipped to deal with the international student experience.
 - ii. The intersectionality of nationality, race, ethnicity, gender and sexuality is extremely complicated. Mental health specialists with an LGBT focus, for example, do not necessarily have the right training to deal with LGBT international students.
- c. Organize programs that allow international students the opportunity to meet and connect with others in the community.
 - i. This can be in the form of International Student Socials, held once a month, that gives international students the opportunity to gather and celebrate with other international students.
 - ii. A yearly event, similar to the International Gala organized by ISU, should be organized for the international graduate student community.
 - iii. This programming can also be a channel for the international community to support one another after tragedies.
 - iv. This programming can be especially important during the holidays when international students are still on campus.
 - v. Focus on programming that celebrates the diversity of international student experiences.
- d. Connect new international students to the various international student organizations on campus in an attempt to foster community.
 - i. While some international student organizations are present at the international student orientation, they are not a comprehensive list of all international student organizations at Cornell. A collated list of international student

- organizations should be created so new and continuing students can connect with the organizations they are interested in.
- ii. This is especially important for students from countries with not much representation amongst the international student organizations. It can be important for these students to find community in international student organizations that are similar in culture.
 - e. Connect international organizations to each other, as well as to existing resource centers, like the Asian and Asian-American Center.
 - f. Organize events that are focused on bringing awareness of different nationalities and cultures to the broader Cornell community.
 - i. This can be in the form of larger, campus-wide events, such as cultural fairs. This could allow multiple departments, international organizations and students to showcase the food and culture of their countries.
 - ii. This can also be in smaller events that encourages the normalization of other countries and their cultures.
 - g. Commit to hiring resident advisors at all on-campus housing at an equal proportion to the number of international students that are residents at the same.
 - i. Many international students choose on-campus student housing, especially in their first year, since it is logistically easier. For their needs, international students should be hired as resident advisors.
 - ii. While acknowledging the Maplewood is not on-campus housing, and international students can thus not be hired as resident advisors, a large number of international students are choosing Maplewood as their housing option. Cornell must find a fund or otherwise ensure international students get a chance to be resident advisors at Maplewood Apartments.
 - iii. International students that arrive on campus for a doctoral program, reliant on the stipend to pay for their living are currently expected to pay two months of deposit to secure housing in Ithaca. This is an unwieldy expectation and adds significant burden to the transition to living in a new country. Therefore, Cornell needs to urgently work with EdR to negotiate an exemption from payment of deposits at least in the first year of an international students' stay. Maplewood in its yester form did not require a deposit and therefore was a haven for international students.

Objective 4: Recruitment and retention of international graduate and professional students and faculty.

Rationale: Currently not a lot of recruitment efforts, both at the University and individual college level, appear to be aimed at international students. International students have financial and legal barriers to visiting Cornell and are rarely flown out by departments for such visits. They thus miss out on opportunities to interact with faculty and other students before starting their degree program.

Following the Campus Climate Survey, Cornell committed to hiring and retaining diverse faculty. Nationality should be considered an important axis of diversity. Currently, only 4.5% of all faculty and only 1% of all full professors at Cornell identified as international in Fall 2017(<http://irp.dpb.cornell.edu/university-factbook/diversity>). This is an alarmingly low number, especially since Cornell prides itself on its international research efforts. This focus on international research needs to be met with an equal level of investment into hiring international faculty.

Recruiting international students and faculty are only part of the challenge. Greater efforts need to be expended on retaining hired faculty and students. Beyond the physical and social support required to retain students (this is covered in other objectives in this section), an important issue that might affect retention is the lack of access to funding opportunities for international students. Most federal research grants and external fellowships are not available to international students. International students are also less likely to have summer funding and unlike their domestic counterparts are not legally allowed to work off-campus easily. A significant and growing percentage of international students (~46% in 2018, up from 19% in 2002) are Professional Master's students and there is extremely limited funding available for these programs (<http://irp.dpb.cornell.edu/university-factbook/student-enrollment>).

Actions:

- a. Design virtual resources/ fairs so as to improve resource access for international students who cannot physically travel to campus for recruitment events.
- b. Work with individual departments to better involve international students in their recruitment weekends.
 - i. Reach out to Graduate Field Assistants (GFA) and Directors of Graduate Studies (DGS) to offer assistance with their individual recruiting weekends. This service could include a virtual tour for potential international students, recording and communicating important information or lectures or connecting them with alternate funding opportunities.
- c. Increase funding for international students, especially for professional degree students.
 - i. This includes funding for research and travel, especially for students conducting research outside the US.
 - ii. This includes summer funding for research and travel.
- d. Increase the number of Cornell fellowships available to continuing international graduate and professional students.
 - i. While Cornell offers a few fellowships for recruitment of new international students, there are no Cornell fellowships available to continuing international graduate students (<https://gradschool.cornell.edu/financial-support/fellowships/continuing-student-fellowships/>).
- e. Increase the number of international faculty that are hired across colleges.
 - i. Ensure that faculty positions are being advertised across multiple platforms both within and outside the US.
 - ii. Prioritize the hiring of international faculty, especially for those positions where international research is the focus.

- f. Provide professional support for faculty so that they can create more linguistically and culturally inclusive teaching and mentoring practices and become more aware of the strengths and challenges of international graduate and professional students.

Transportation

Introduction

Regardless of their degree program, field, or funding status, every graduate and professional student must use some form of transportation to get to and from campus at some point during their time at Cornell. Further, many, if not all, graduate and professional students will also use some sort of transportation for trips away from Ithaca, whether for professional reasons, such as travel to conferences, or personal ones, such as trips to visit family or vacation over break. Along with its ubiquity, there are unique elements to graduate student transportation that are distinct from those of other groups at Cornell. First, graduate and professional students may be traveling similar distances to campus as faculty and staff, but on a much more constrained budget. Therefore, on average, graduate students spend more time commuting than do undergraduates. Second, many graduate and professional students have demanding program requirements that require them to be present on campus for long hours; some lab activities, or other in-person program activities, such as on-call hours for veterinary students, may even require very late night or very early morning transportation. At such times, public transportation is not necessarily convenient, if it is even available at all.

The transportation section of the 2013 iteration of the GPCI had two objective areas: parking and public transportation. For parking, it called for more “reasonable, fair, and equitable” parking options, such as reduced parking rates for graduate students who live on campus and pay for a residential parking permit there, and for professional students in the College of Veterinary Medicine. Another series of action items focused on better awareness and communication about transportation options for students with temporary mobility issues. The public transportation objective included some action items which have been achieved, such as the development of a better TCAT trip planner⁶ and the development of a mobile transit app in conjunction with Cornell students⁷. Other areas of focus in 2013 included early morning OmniRide hours for graduate and professional students, and route development, including park-and-ride, targeted at the graduate and professional student population.

There are numerous transportation options available to graduate and professional students, regardless of whether they live on- or off-campus. In addition to public transportation, students can drive their own personal vehicle, bike, or walk. Carpools, facilitated by Cornell-sanctioned services like ZimRide, are also an option. The biggest change in the suite of transportation options since the last GPCI was conducted in 2013, however, would be the June 2017 authorization of “transportation network companies” (application-based ride share companies) in New York State. The growth of Uber, Lyft, and other such companies has changed the transportation-based landscape of Ithaca, providing a reliable backup method of getting to campus, and, for some students, becoming a part of their daily commute.

⁶ This was achieved through the integration of TCAT routes and timetables with the Google Map interface in December 2017 (see <https://www.ithacajournal.com/story/news/local/2017/12/19/tcat-route-schedule-info-now-available-google-maps/965692001/>).

⁷ <https://cornellsun.com/2018/05/01/student-project-team-releases-new-tcat-app-to-simplify-navigation-process/>

Of course, there are likely to be as many transportation strategies as there are graduate and professional students on campus. However, some trends and commonalities emerge when looking at aggregate data, provided by Cornell Transportation and Mail Services. The goal of this document is outline three areas where continued emphasis is needed. First, given the prevalence of public transportation in graduate students' transportation plans, the first objective targets continued provision of high-quality public transportation services, with future emphasis on exploring potential routes to better serve areas where graduate students live and work. The next objective focuses on parking: although fewer graduate students avail themselves of this option, it is still an important area of focus, especially for students in professional programs like those in the College of Veterinary Medicine. In addition, one specific actionable objective proposes one important means of connecting these two transportation methods. Finally, the third objective addresses transportation and travel out of Ithaca. Although this is an area where the University has less purview, and was not addressed in the previous GPCI, it is still an important, and often frustrating, component of graduate students' transportation systems.

Objectives

Objective 1: Provide graduate and professional students with functional and comprehensive public transportation options

Rationale: Public transportation is the single most widely utilized transportation method for graduate and professional students traveling to and from campus. Given the predominance of Cornell ridership for TCAT, it is clearly important for all campus communities, but especially for graduate and professional students, who tend to have longer commutes and constrained budgets. It is also important that gains made in the integration of TCAT services with technology be recognized and continue to develop as technologies advance.

Actions:

- a. Encourage the Cornell representatives on the TCAT Board of Directors to survey the needs of graduate and professional students as distinct from those of undergraduates, and to hold a yearly focus group with each community for their views on their changing public transportation needs.
- b. Given the popularity of Route 10, the Cornell-Commons shuttle, TCAT and Cornell Transportation Services should consider the development of other shuttle style routes: these routes could be designed to connect different residential neighborhoods than those serviced by Route 10 with central campus, the South Meadow Street shopping area with central campus, or downtown with other parts of campus, such as the Ag Quad and biological sciences areas. Introducing weekend service for Route 10 should also be considered.
- c. Together with TCAT, Cornell Transportation Services should explore the possibility of creating campus "circulator" routes, which would move students from one part of campus to another without the wait times associated with the buses to and from downtown.

- d. Work with TCAT to continue to identify areas of the community that are underserved, and times (especially at night) where demand for buses is not being met. Faculty and advisors should be encouraged to consider the timing of the last buses when scheduling exams, research, or other academic activities at night.
- e. Explore the feasibility of reducing or eliminating the OmniRide rate for graduate and professional students, including through allocation of funds from the Student Activity Fee.
- f. Explore the feasibility of expanding the hours in which OmniRide access is free for graduate and professional students, including early morning access.
- g. Pursue a policy that would give graduate students who park in the B Lot free access to TCAT Route 82, which connects the B Lot with the rest of campus.
- h. The Graduate School and GPSA should ensure that rideshare options, like Cornell ZimRide, are well publicized. Greater attention should be given to the possibility of carpooling as a viable option for the daily commute to work, as well as for longer trips (see Objective 3).
- i. Continue to explore and develop ways to make campus and Collegetown more friendly to cyclists, including potential integration with the Lime bike system that is available downtown and development of longer bike paths connecting campus with nearby towns.

Objective 2: Provide parking options that balance the goals of accessibility, sustainability, and reduced congestion

Rationale: Parking is a transportation option that is most likely to be utilized by students who are the most time constrained, either due to demanding lab or program requirements, or to family or other off-campus needs. These community members' parking needs should continue to be supported, or even expanded, as the need arises. However, the needs of convenience and accessibility also must be balanced with the negative externalities arising from personal car use, including pollution and on-campus congestion. Continuing to acknowledge that such a tension exists and continuing to dialogue about what the campus community would like to prioritize are important parts of achieving this objective.

Actions:

- a. Residential parking rates at Maplewood, Hasbrouck, and Thurston Court should be subsidized whenever possible, especially for students with families who are already more budget constrained and more likely to rely on a car for transportation.
- b. Given the expanding enrollment in the College of Veterinary Medicine and the demanding on-call hours required by the program, more parking passes should be made available to these students in their preferred lots.
- c. Graduate and professional students, especially those in representative bodies like the GPSA, should actively engage in debate about the presence of cars on campus, and weigh the costs and benefits of potential policies that would limit or exclude cars from campus, or parts of campus, during peak hours.

- d. Advocate for a system that allocates parking passes to students whose research or teaching requires frequent travel to campus at “off-peak” hours, which may require graduate or professional students being allowed to purchase parking passes before undergraduate students.
- e. Parking signage should be standardized and made as explicit as possible, so that it is clear when the lots are free.
- f. As it becomes more widespread, Cornell should consider investing in technology that enables drivers to see real time where spots are available. This will reduce time and fuel wasted when drivers circle congested parts of campus looking for parking.

Objective 3: Continue to advocate for economical and flexible transportation options for travel out of Ithaca, whether by bus or by air

Rationale: Travel away from Ithaca is a fundamental part of most graduate and professional students’ career and personal development. The time and cost associated with travel can potentially deter Cornell students from attending conferences or job interviews, especially when compared with students at peer institutions. A robust transportation sector is also important for combatting isolation and ensuring graduate students can remain connected with their families, friends, and colleagues in other places. These factors are all likely to be highly weighted when graduate and professional students are choosing whether or not to attend Cornell.

Actions:

- a. Cornell should continue to advocate with the Ithaca Airport on behalf of its students and encourage development of new routes and the possibility of contracting with low-cost carriers for service. The ITH-IAD flight is a positive step in this direction and this sort of momentum should be continued.
- b. Transportation options, such as bus service, that would help students flying out of cheaper airports in the area (such as Syracuse or even Rochester) should be explored by campus transportation leaders.
- c. Right now, there is no direct transportation connection between Cornell and the airports in New York City, which can pose a significant time barrier for travel, especially travel abroad. Cornell should work with Ithaca city leaders to attract companies willing to address this gap.

Students with Families

Introduction

Cornell must recognize and support the unique challenges that students with family responsibilities face in achieving their coursework, teaching, and research goals. Given their limited financial resources and substantial demands on their time, there is no doubt that student parents face substantial hardship that can hinder their academic progress. In addition, graduate and professional students occasionally deal with the challenge of caring for aging or ill parents. Family services and the support structure for student parents and their partners is an issue of student access. Graduate and professional students should not feel the need to choose between attending Cornell and attending to the needs of their families. It should also be emphasized that improved family services and support would help to alleviate many stressors that affect students with families and lead to more positive long-term outcomes for both student parents and their children. A permanent commitment to addressing the needs of students with family responsibilities furthers the University's mission of creating a diverse and inclusive student community.

Objective 1: *Improving students' access to information about resources and data for students with family.*

Rationale: The biggest struggles for many graduate and professional student parents are time and money. As student parents new to Cornell or new to parenthood begin to seek out information about raising a family in Ithaca, they often become frustrated and overwhelmed. We applaud the strides made in access to information about resources for students with family through the consolidated studentswithfamilies.cornell.edu website that is also widely advertised to new incoming students during orientation. While hiring a single staff member dedicated as point of contact for student parents was not possible due to limited resources, we feel that the establishment of the students with families advisory committee serves well as a substitute that also at the same time supports a permanent network of staff and administrators who play a role in providing support services to students and their families with the aim of facilitating increased communication across administrative units. We hope to see the maintenance of these resources. However, we feel that there is still very limited data on students with family in general and there is a lack of support for a peer-to-peer network that would both serve as a community as well as an information exchange platform.

Actions:

- a. Improve the students with families website in regards to the following:
 - i. Information about child care options and price ranges for the different options or consider giving more information on the website on low-, mid- and high cost care options.

- ii. Information to child- and family friendly programming, spaces and activities on campus and in the community. Alternatively, provide a link to other websites that keeps an updated calendar of local child-friendly events, and/or add a child-friendly filter to the Cornell events calendar.
- iii. Information about the local or state assistance programs and fellowships for which many graduate and professional students are likely to be eligible, especially in the area of affordable housing like Section 8, or other non-profit organizations that provide low income housing in the area like the Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services (INHS).
- b. Create a forum or discussion board for students to ask and answer questions.
 - i. Consider/encourage the establishment of a students with family association that can serve as a peer-to-peer support group and information exchange.
- c. Improve data collection on students with families with the aim of increasing usage of and access to existing family services. Potential point of data collection include:
 - i. Asking for family status once a student accepts Cornell's offer of admission.
- d. Increase access to information about emergency and contingency funds by making department staff and faculty more aware of their availability so they can direct students in need to those resources.

Objective 2: Fostering a supportive academic climate for GPS with family.

Rationale: A myriad of factors contribute to creating a culture that is welcoming to students with children and their partners. We applaud the myriad of family-oriented programming at Hasbrouck and appreciate the availability of short term mobility permit parking for parents in the late stages of pregnancy and reduced-rate temporary parking permits for breastfeeding mothers who need to leave the campus to breastfeed. Moreover, we are glad for the inclusion of lactation room in the Cornell Interactive Map that also gives precise direction to these rooms within the different university buildings; we hope to see increased awareness of this feature in the future. However, on the issue of parental accommodation, there continues to be variation across departments, staff, and faculty members in both awareness of the policy and how to appropriately accommodate student parents.

Actions:

- a. Encourage explicit discussion of the implementation of graduate and professional student parental accommodation policy within departments to increase general awareness of the needs of student parents and to foster a supportive and inclusive academic environment.
- b. Update the GPS parental accommodation policy, in particular:
 - i. Consider extending parental leave from 6 to 8 weeks to reflect recent changes in NYS law.
 - ii. Consider instituting a reduced workload period to help new student parents to transition back to academic life, especially if they are required to do this mid-semester.

- iii. Consider current restrictions on when students become eligible for parental leave and/or subsequent parental leave.
- c. Increase awareness surrounding the scheduling needs of student parents, particularly with respect to the scheduling of courses, meetings, and research commitments during the evening and identifying more appropriately flexible funding sources, e.g. research versus teaching assistantships. This is best done through a best practices document that can serve as a guideline for departments and academic units.
- d. Increase awareness that student parents are eligible to apply for the Provost Diversity Fellowship for Advanced Doctoral Students, and expand the pool of money allocated to this Fellowship so that it can accommodate more diverse advanced doctoral students.
- e. Improve family support at Hasbrouck and Thurston, in particular:
 - i. Deliberate hiring of at least ONE GRA who is a student with family.
 - ii. Thinking of an intentional family center in the facility.
 - iii. Reinstating short-term guest parking on site, which would allow frequent guests who provide critical support to the family community (such as babysitters, visiting parents, social workers, tutors, on-site medical personnel, ESL coaches) to park for free.
- f. Investigate the possibility of hiring or appointing a staff member to be an advocate for students with family in terms of academic accommodations. Alternatively, increase awareness that the Graduate School is an advocate that can help facilitate negotiations surrounding various departmental or advisor-related accommodations.

Objective 3: GPS should have access to affordable child care options

Rationale: Access to child care is a major concern for many parents. Child care expenses can be particularly prohibitive for student parents, and yet time away from coursework, research, and teaching commitments hinders academic progress. We applaud the expansion of the child care grant that now accounts for special needs and raised the cap for each family. The expansion in the grant money pool is also a welcome progress; and free membership of care.com has improved student parents' ability to find more affordable and flexible child care arrangements. However, even with the current childcare grant structure, student parents are hardly getting enough subsidy and the reach of the grant has remained modest, despite recent aggressive expansions. Due to the high cost of childcare facilities at Cornell's Bright Horizons and the city of Ithaca, the reality remains that most student parents have to find child care alternatives that are further away from their home and workplace.

Actions:

- a. Actively investigate ways to increase the number of applicants for the child care grant, or potentially investigate why there is an underutilization of the grant among students.

- b. Consider additional grants that would subsidize other child-related expenses that could potentially hinder a student parent’s academic success:
 - a. This includes things like additional conference travel grants for students who have to travel with their family, etc.
- c. Investigate ways to provide more affordable child care options closer to Cornell. Some solutions include:
 - a. Working together with Bright Horizons to decrease cost and wait times.
 - b. Supporting and promoting convenient community-based child care programs, such as child care cooperatives with a core professional staff and parent volunteers for support.

Objective 4: Provide support and inclusion for student partners and spouses.

Rationale: Cornell should recognize that supporting the partners and families of students is supporting students. Financial and emotional struggles put an incredible stress on students and their families, which ultimately affects students’ abilities to achieve their academic and research goals. Student partners often perform a substantial portion of child care and domestic responsibilities. However, the unfortunate reality is that student partners often experience incredible stress and isolation as their partners pursue a degree at Cornell. Student partners report experiencing emotional distress, stemming from a lack of support, a sense of isolation, a loss of identity, and significant financial worries. This can be especially true for international student partners, who experience additional cultural, legal, and language barriers to meaningfully integrating into the local community. While we applaud the strides that have been made in providing more support and information for student partners in terms of job hunting locally, we feel that student partners, especially those without children, have not been a central part of the discussion surrounding family services in general.

Actions:

- a. Identify ways for student partners to build a network and make connections in Ithaca, including:
 - i. Increasing inclusion of student partners in the campus community, such as extending invitations to student partners to participate in on-campus events or creating on-campus events specifically just for student partners.
 - ii. Encourage and actively support the building of student partner networks.
- b. Expand career service offerings for graduate and professional student partners, including increasing access to information about acquiring permanent or temporary employment at Cornell.
 - i. The career job fair for student partners should also be expanded into either more sessions, or also an online session or webinar.
- c. Extend campus services and resources offered to include student partners when possible.

Housing

Introduction

Every graduate and professional student who sets foot on Cornell's campus needs a place to live. There are on- and off-campus housing options available to students, offering a diverse array of living arrangements to cater to individual student needs. A variety of factors influence students' selection of housing, including but not limited to cost, location, access to transportation, amenities, and family services. Additionally, the issue of housing has obvious connections with other GPCI topics such as sense of community, international students, family services, and transportation.

However, navigating the Cornell-affiliated properties as well as the complex Ithaca/Tompkins housing market can be a challenge for returning students, and nearly impossible for first-year students who often do not have the luxury of visiting Ithaca to explore housing options before August.

Cornell offers limited housing options for the graduate and professional community. The largest Cornell-owned property, Hasbrouck Apartments, contains 338 units with a primary focus on serving the needs of graduate and professional students, postdoctoral associates, and visiting scholars with partners and/or families, although single-occupant units do exist. Additionally, the newly renovated Maplewood Apartments, with 870 beds, is a public-private partnership housing complex serving graduate and professional students. Altogether, these options cover the housing needs of roughly 15-20% of the graduate and professional student population, of which only 5% is Cornell-owned and thus considered "on-campus."

Thus, the vast majority of graduate and professional students rely on off-campus housing. Most live in the city or town of Ithaca, the village of Cayuga Heights, or the town of Lansing, although some venture farther away from campus to other parts of Tompkins County or even beyond. Units range from studio or 1-bedroom apartments to multi-bedroom units, townhouses, and stand-alone houses. Prices can vary widely depending on unit size, location, demand, and amenities. Apartments closer to campus, especially in Collegetown, can fetch rents approaching \$1500-2000 per month, while units in Fall Creek or neighboring towns can fall as low as \$500 per room per month. Rent hikes of 5-10% per year are common.

Typically, students looking for off-campus housing will peruse various listing sites such as Cornell's Off-Campus Housing listings, Craigslist, or similar, while some students rely on word-of-mouth. Resources offered by departments, fields, or colleges are sporadic and often informal. Many international students and first-year students default to on-campus housing options or Maplewood due to the relative ease of signing up without having to trek to Ithaca, vet the property and landlord, or decipher a lease.

Objective 1: Continue to improve the quality of life at on-campus housing

Rationale: University-run housing offers a reliable option for students who prioritize amenities such as a safe neighborhood, structured programming, ease of leasing without visiting, family-

friendliness, and proximity to campus. In general, the Hasbrouck on-campus complex is effective at serving the specific needs of graduate and professional students who come to Cornell with a family or plan to start a family. However, certain issues still persist, which we would like to address here.

Actions:

- a. Continue to prioritize family-focused and family-friendly housing at Hasbrouck.
- b. Periodically discuss the state of the Hasbrouck complex with Cornell administrators, Hasbrouck residents, and graduate community advisors (GCAs).
- c. Create an additional faculty fellow position at Hasbrouck.
 - i. Currently, Hasbrouck only has one fellow, while West Campus has one per house.
- d. Improve the bus service to Hasbrouck.
 - i. Add buses during underserved times, specifically during nights and weekends.
 - ii. Additional routes to locations such as Wegmans or the Ithaca Mall would see high utilization.
- e. Restructure the parking permit system for Hasbrouck parking lots.
 - i. Allow residents with Hasbrouck parking permits to park at other lots on campus during the daytime.
 - ii. Create a pre-planned guest parking pass system to allow guests to park at Hasbrouck on a short term (24-72 hour) basis.
 - iii. Reduce the price of the yearly Hasbrouck parking permit, as the bus service is often insufficient for students with families.
- f. Streamline online resources that describe available on-campus housing options.
 - i. Redirect all links to a single site.
- g. Improve apartment amenities at Hasbrouck.
 - i. Provide air conditioning units with no installation fee.
 - ii. Remove data caps for Hasbrouck residents using the Cornell internet network.
 - i. All students across campus currently have a 200GB/month data restriction for work usage (on the Cornell network).
 - ii. Hasbrouck students use the same network at their on-campus housing units but must use adhere to the same data restriction.
 - iii. Students with families often reach maximum data usage due to personal use.
 - iii. Designate a subset of units at Hasbrouck as pet-friendly.
 - iv. Install dishwashers in units.
- h. Establish a timeline for renovation of Hasbrouck.
 - i. Current complex is over 25 years old and will eventually have to be renovated and/or replaced at significant capital cost.
 - ii. Ensure that any renovations result in minimal changes to the cost of living at Hasbrouck.

Objective 2: Continue dialogue with Maplewood Apartments to improve quality of life

Rationale: With over 800 beds located within walking distance of campus, Maplewood is an important supplier of graduate and professional student housing. The public-private partnership with Greystar Real Estate (EdR prior to the 2018 merger) gives Cornell significant interest and influence in the success of the Maplewood complex, which was fully renovated and reopened in Fall 2018. Graduate and professional students have high rates of lease renewal after the first year, but comments from residents suggest this is partly due to the location and lack of better options, as opposed to genuine satisfaction with the apartments. There are some obvious areas room for improvement, with some issues exacerbated by delays in the approval and construction of the property.

Actions:

- a. Periodically discuss the state of the Maplewood complex with Cornell administrators, Maplewood residents, and Greystar representatives.
- b. Improve the logistics of rental and lease agreements
 - i. Set aside a portion of available units each rental season for newly admitted graduate and professional students.
 - ii. Add language to the contract regulating management's ability to move students between units without the input of those students.
- c. Improve transportation amenities at Maplewood.
 - i. Add a bus route directly between Maplewood and the Ithaca Commons.
 - ii. Add additional buses during evenings and weekends.
 - iii. Designate a parking lot for guest parking.
 - i. Currently, there are only six guest parking spots for the entire complex.
- d. Improve the system for requesting and performing maintenance.
 - i. Optimize the user-facing interface of the online maintenance request portal.
 - i. Currently, many students submit requests manually to the administrative office due to difficulties navigating the portal.
 - ii. Mandate a minimum of 24 hours advance notice prior to performing any maintenance.
 - i. Residents have reported instances where maintenance staff enters apartments without warning.
- e. Install sufficient waste disposal services.
 - i. Install composting receptacles.
 - ii. Install additional recycling and waste receptacles.
 - i. Receptacles located on the far end of the complex discourage timely disposal of accumulated waste.
- f. Increase basic security measures in Maplewood units.
 - i. Install doorbells and/or intercoms.

- ii. Install privacy drapes or blinds inside front doors of townhouse units to block the view into the units from the street.

Objective 3: Improve support for graduate and professional students who choose to live off-campus

Rationale: Since Cornell relies on the greater Ithaca and Tompkins County housing market to provide residences for most graduate and professional students, Cornell must provide adequate resources to help students find a place to live. The Off-Campus Living office, under the Campus and Community Engagement umbrella, offers in-person consultation and online resources, albeit with limited staffing and budget. This office serves both undergraduate and graduate/professional cohorts.

Actions:

- a. Continue to offer consultation and resources through the Off-Campus Living office.
 - i. Hire additional staff to focus exclusively on graduate/professional student housing.
- b. Collate online on- and off-campus resources into a single, coherent Cornell-hosted website.
 - I. Consult graduate and professional students in the website development process.
 - II. Combine information found at living.cornell.edu and ccengagement.cornell.edu/off-campus-living.
 - III. Use search-engine optimization (SEO) to make this site the first listed for common searches as “grad housing Cornell” and “Ithaca grad student housing”.
 - IV. Convert housing pamphlets into ADA-compliant PDFs.
 - V. Add more information concerning housing options beyond the traditional Ithaca neighborhoods, including but not limited to Lansing, Trumansburg, and Slaterville.
- c. Create a system for current students to vet off-campus listings on behalf of students who cannot visit Ithaca prior to move-in.
 - I. Leverage existing informal department-level systems for this purpose.
- d. Relocate the Off-Campus Living office to a more accessible location.
 - I. The 5th floor of Willard Straight Hall is not ADA-compliant.
- e. Incorporate presentations on off-campus resources into department and college orientations.

Objective 4: Help create a better community for graduate and professional students living off-campus

Rationale: The Cornell and Ithaca/Tompkins communities are intricately connected, and as such, Cornell should be committed to continually improving the communities in which graduate and professional students live. The Infrastructure, Properties, and Planning office works with

community partners in planning and implementing housing projects in the community, such as the Maplewood and North Campus redevelopment projects. Additionally, the University's Office of Community Relations deals with the intertwined nature of Cornell students and staff who work and study at the university and live in the community. The GPSA has also begun to work more closely with community partners to voice the graduate and professional student perspective in the community.

Actions:

- a. Solicit graduate and professional student involvement in community groups such as the Rental Housing Advisory Commission, the Collegetown Neighborhood Council, the Campus-Community Coalition, and similar neighborhood organizations.
- b. Improve late-night bus access for residents of Fall Creek.
- c. Continue to solicit feedback from graduate and professional students when evaluating on-campus housing projects.
- d. Invite graduate and professional students to attend town halls, planning meetings, and similar forums to provide a student perspective.
- e. Exert Cornell's influence on the community to counteract predatory landlord practices such as, but not limited to, aggressive rent hikes, abusive contract terms, and poor responsiveness to maintenance requests.

Sense of Community

Introduction

One of the most important components of the life of a graduate and professional student is belonging to a community. Students often rely on the communities that form organically through their departments and/or fields and while these close-knit communities are extremely beneficial, they should also serve as a stepping-stone to form other communities on campus. Understandably so, it is this reason why both the 2007 and 2013 Graduate and Professional Community Initiative stress the desire of graduate and professional students at Cornell to “expand opportunities for cross-departmental collaborations and student development” (2013 GPCI). Having cross-departmental collaborations would enable students to engage more in-depth with the greater Cornell community as well as explore resources that may not have been on the purview of the student’s horizon.

Developing a sense of community in the broader sense of the word would be beneficial to all members of the Cornell community. A sense of community is synonymous with a sense of belonging and expanding opportunities for cross-departmental collaboration will energize students into creating and maintaining meaningful social relationships on campus. These interactions will foster a sense of community as well as improve the mental health and the well-being of graduate and professional students alike.

Cross-departmental networking between graduate and professional students will enrich the intellectual life on campus as well as provide a platform to disengage from the pressures and demands that a student feels in their daily life. Finding outlets on campus to network and build both academic, professional, and personal relationships is a key component in developing a sense of community at Cornell. Fostering these relationships and giving them a platform to develop in a meaningful manner will make the students feel more connected to one another as well as Cornell as an institution. Furthermore, as the 2013 GPCI document states, “graduate and professional student alumni who strongly identify with their experience at Cornell could prove to be generous donors to the University.” This aspect of fostering a sense of community now will be beneficial in the future community in years to come.

There are many challenges that may inhibit graduate and professional students in participating in events and/or programming that are created to enhance a sense of community on campus. The 2007 GCI and 2013 GPCI provide the necessary recommendations in order to build a sense of community on campus. This new GPCI document borrows the same objectives as the past GCI and GPCI documents and provides additional action items that may align more with the current culture at Cornell. After all, this section, as well as the other sections of the GPCI document are structured in a way that recognizes the challenges that students may face while trying to provide possible solutions to overcome these challenges.

Objectives

Objective 1: Improve opportunities for meaningful interactions and collaboration across the fields for the graduate and professional student community.

Rationale: Programming events provide an excellent avenue to network and socialize but do not provide the necessary tools to create meaningful and lasting relationships. Structuring events in a way that encourages students to develop and follow-up with these interactions would “lay the foundation for strong and meaningful personal and professional relationships” (2013 GPCI).

Actions:

- a. Increase opportunities for graduate and professional students to work collaboratively.
- b. Identify ways to incentivize students and faculty to develop novel and innovative partnerships and collaborations.
- c. Increase opportunities for research graduate and professional students to present their work to a wide audience in a casual setting (e.g. Three-Minute Thesis) and incentivize students to participate in these opportunities by providing recognition and/or prizes.
- d. Increase inclusiveness across diverse communities within the graduate and professional student population (See Diversity and/or International Students).
- e. Utilize already established venues (See Big Red Barn) to promote social and intellectual interactions between graduate and professional students across departments and fields.

Objective 2: Support programming events, and activities that encourage social cohesion, connectedness and communication

Rationale: The creation of the Graduate and Professional Student Programming Board (GPSPB) has enhanced programming events on campus. The Graduate and Professional Student Assembly Finance Commission has also provided student organizations with the financial means to create unique programming events for the wider Cornell community. However, many students are still unaware of the events occurring on campus or the events occur at a date and time when the student is occupied with other matters.

Actions:

- a. Advertise events in a wide format and continue to improve communication about these on-going programming events to the student community.
- b. Provide resources and funding to create programming in the Arts and Humanities where students can share a meaningful interaction through the arts (e.g. student-led plays at the Big Red Barn, art exhibitions, etc).
- c. Improve communication among student organizations and between departments on campus. Encourage cross-departmental events and co-sponsorship of these events.
- d. Continue to provide a graduate student organization fair as part of the orientation programming to increase awareness of the many student efforts on campus.

- e. Create and organize a ClubFests that will highlight the different clubs and organizations available for Graduate and Professional students at Cornell.
- f. Provide programming events that will encourage students to collaborate and form meaningful relationships during orientation week.
- g. Continue to support the operations at the Big Red Barn to focus on better serving the needs of the graduate and professional student community.
- h. Continue to organize a second orientation for students who matriculate in the Spring and find ways to follow up with the students to measure the success of these orientations.
- i. Consider the repercussions and consequences of reserving locations used by graduate and professional students as a workplace, such as the lobby of the Physical Science Building, Baker Portico, etc.). These events either displace the students from their workspace and/or interrupts their workflow. Consider holding club meetings during feasible times for students--a lunch hour being a popular time.

Objective 3: Support and encourage personal development and growth

Rationale: A common trend amongst graduate and professional students is to focus on the daily demands that their program and/or teaching responsibilities entail. Finding ways to re-energize and renew their energy and interest in their academic works is vital for both graduate and professional students. The 2013 GPCI clearly states, “learning how to balance professional and academic commitments with a happy and healthy personal life should be considered a critical part of the graduate and professional student education.” Creating this balance between academic and personal life may be hard for some students and guidance from a mentor may be the answer to finding this balance in the graduate student’s life.

Actions:

- a. Continue to develop supportive mentorship networks, such as:
 - i. Peer-to-peer networks among different cohorts of graduate and professional students
 - ii. Between graduate and professional students and alumni
 - iii. Between graduate and professional students and undergraduates, and
 - iv. Between graduate and professional students and faculty
- b. Continue to reward and recognize students for outstanding commitment to community engagement and service
 - i. Continue to support university-wide awards for outstanding artistic or athletic achievement, public engagement and outreach, teaching, campus leadership, etc.
 - ii. Continue to encourage fields to recognize commitment to intellectual and personal breadth.
- c. Continue to encourage faculty to have supportive conversations with students about work-life balance and personal growth and development.

- i. Continue to provide training for Directors of Graduate Studies where they are well equipped to know and react to the pressures that Graduate students encounter (See Mental Health)
- d. In hiring new administration, faculty, and staff, who may in turn serve as mentors for students, include candidates from underrepresented minorities, who are first generation and/or come from a low-income background.
- e. Encourage the development of resources for finding romantic relations between Graduate and professional students (i.e. speed dating, mixers, etc) for all genders and sexualities.
- f. Continue to create and actively promote events where students can present and share any hardships they have faced and how they have navigated and/or overcame those hardships.

Objective 4: Improve integration and communication across departments, fields, and schools

Rationale: Encouraging a social connected-ness between graduate and professional students can often be cumbersome for reasons outside of the student's control. This may stem from lack of awareness of programming events or miscommunication between schools. Cornell should encourage more transparent lines of communication between schools, departments, and fields where students know of the different opportunities available on campus.

Actions:

- a. Continue to encourage the GPSA to reach all students from all disciplines, fields and schools.
- b. Encourage fields and schools to promote events sponsored by the GPSA.
- c. Support departmental efforts to maintain user-friendly and updated websites and calendars to advertise seminar schedules, courses, and faculty expertise.
- d. Improve opportunities within departments and fields for graduate and professional students to interact with faculty, including visiting speakers.
- e. Support efforts to centralize information about the graduate student life experience.
- f. Continue to generate easier ways for individuals across campus to sign up and receive emails about events going on across campus that may be an interest to them.
- g. Consolidate information of events in areas where Graduate and Professional students network such as the Big Red Barn and the professional schools.
- h. Consider creating a universal email listserv that will reach all graduate and professional students.
- i. Create programming that will bring together professional and graduate students together in order to bridge the gap and apparent divide between students in higher education.
- j. Give the GPSA leadership autonomy of a listserv where they can add/remove students without having to rely on external resources.
- k. Increase the number of times that the GPSA can send emails to all Graduate and Professional students.

Objective 5: Encourage the “One Cornell” theme across all Cornell campuses

Rationale: Section VII of the Cornell Strategic Plan highlights the importance of “think[ing] of Cornell as a single entity, embedded in but transcending and overarching strong colleges and unit.” This should also extend to the sense of community across all of the campuses that share the Cornell emblem and values. Cornell as an institution should find ways to develop this sense of community across all campuses and should also provide resources to foster a sense of a greater community of Cornell University.

Actions:

- a. Improve communication and connection between the Ithaca campus, Geneva, Cornell-Tech, Weil School of Medicine, and other Cornell campuses around the world.
- b. Provide the graduate and professional students with resources for collaborations between campuses.
- c. Generate ways for easier communication between students in the campus.
- d. Allow the students to participate in programming events (sponsored by the GPSA) across all of the Cornell Campus.

The Members

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Graduate and Professional Assembly, Academic Year 2019-2020

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Victoria Kasonde, Vice President of Operations

Taylor Tejada, Vice President of Communications

Alex Loiben, Counsel

Resolution 8: A Resolution to Adopt the Graduate and Professional Community Initiative

Sponsored by: Alexa Cohn, Executive Vice President & Chair of GPCI Committee

Whereas, the GPSA in 2006-2007 created the Graduate Community Initiative (2007 GCI) to elevate discussion around graduate and professional students on campus; and

Whereas, the GPSA in 2012-2013 wrote a new 5-year strategic plan known as the Graduate and Professional Community Initiative (2013 GPCI); and

Whereas, the GPCI Ad Hoc Committee has evaluated both the 2007 GCI and 2013 GPCI, reviewed the progress made since 2013, identified eight major topic areas on which to focus, and drafted a full document entitled “Graduate and Professional Community Initiative 2020: A Strategic Plan for the Graduate and Professional Student Community”; and

Whereas, in order to understand the needs of graduate and professional students, the Ad Hoc Committee reached out to the graduate and professional student community by organizing town halls, meeting with various university administrators and community stakeholders, engaging in discussions during GPSA meetings, and soliciting feedback via electronic forms sent to relevant communities; and

Whereas, having a strategic plan for the graduate and professional student community that is developed collaboratively and comprehensively addresses issues will help the GPSA better advocate for the needs of our community; and

Whereas, the university administration and community stakeholders can use this document to better understand the needs of all graduate and professional students and to adopt the recommendations in collaboration with GPSA for a better campus community; therefore, be it

Resolved, that the GPSA adopts the attached Graduate and Professional Community Initiative as the five-year strategic plan for GPSA and the graduate and professional community; and

Resolved, that the GPCI Ad Hoc will write the Introduction and Supplementary Appendix to be included in the final document; and

Resolved, that this Resolution and the Graduate and Professional Community Initiative be sent to *Martha Pollack*, President; *Robert Harrison*, Chair of Board of Trustees; *Vijay Pendakur*, Dean of Students; *Ryan Lombardi*, Vice President for Student and Campus Life; *Michael Kotlikoff*, Provost; *Barbara Knuth*, Dean of the Graduate School; *Jan Allen*, Associate Dean for Academic and Student Affairs; *Janna Lamey*, Associate Dean for Graduate Student Life; *Jason Kahabka*, Associate Dean for Administration; *Sara Xayarath Hernandez*, Associate Dean for Inclusion and Student Engagement; *Caleb Yu*, Graduate and International Career Advisor; *Jennifer Forbes*, Director of the Big Red Barn; *Gina Giambattista*, Director of the Office of Assemblies; *Eduardo Peñalver* Dean, Cornell Law School; *Lorin D. Warnick*, Austin O. Hooey Dean of Veterinary Medicine; *Mark W. Nelson*, Dean of the Samuel Curtis Johnson Graduate School of Management; *Charles Van Loan*, Dean of Faculty; *Kathryn Boor*, Dean of the College of

Agriculture and Life Science; *J. Meejin Joon*, Dean of the College of Architecture, Art and Planning; *Ray Jayawardhana*, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences; *Lance Collins*, Dean of the College of Engineering; *Kate Walsh*, Dean of the School of Hotel Administration; *Rachel Dunifon*, Dean of the College of Human Ecology; *Alexander Colvin*, Dean of the School of Industrial and Labor Relations; *Brendan Lanners*, Executive Director of Office of Global Learning; *Robin Hamlisch*, Director of Counseling and Psychological Services; *Avery August*, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs; *Emmanuel P. Giannelis*, Vice Provost for Research; *Wendy Wolford*, Vice Provost for International Affairs; *Gary Koretzky*, Vice Provost of Academic Integration; *J. Gregorey Morrisett*, Vice Provost of Cornell Tech; *Keith Barton*, Associate Vice President for Facilities and Campus Services; *Scot Vanderpool*, General Manager of TCAT; *Svante Myrick*, Mayor of Ithaca; all DGS's; and staff in each listed office.

Respectfully Submitted,

Alexa Cohn

Executive Vice President & Chair of GPCI Committee