

Resolution for consideration by the faculty senate at its March 11, 2009 meeting 3/03/09

Whereas Cornell is facing serious financial challenges that have resulted in a 5% cut in the base operating budgets across campus, with further cuts to come, and a freeze on filling all but a handful of new faculty positions, dramatically affecting the core operations of the university,

Whereas Cornell's financial problems have been exacerbated by the practice adopted by past administrations of initiating the construction of new buildings before sufficient funding has been secured,

Whereas completing construction projects without sufficient funding has required Cornell to undertake a substantial amount of debt financing at a time when the yield from Cornell's endowment and new gifts from alumni are much lower than in recent years,

Whereas Cornell has made important commitments to other worthy objectives such as increasing financial aid for students and making Cornell a carbon-neutral campus,

Be it resolved that

We call upon President Skorton and the University Trustees to adopt a new policy for governing the construction and renovation of all buildings, the Full Disclosure Policy, that requires a comprehensive plan for securing the funding of the construction and operation of each building before the construction begins, and that this plan for financing each building should be made available in advance to the campus community,

In addition, consistent with the announced construction pause, we call upon President Skorton and the University Trustees to evaluate the financial status of ongoing construction projects, and if a comprehensive plan for the funding of a project has not yet been established, to delay the construction timetable until an acceptable plan for financing is in place,

We also call upon President Skorton and the University Trustees to enforce strict standards for energy efficiency in the design of new buildings and renovations of existing buildings to reduce future operating costs, and in addition, to reflect the increased public concern about energy security and climate change and to facilitate the transition to a carbon-neutral campus.

Valerie Bunce, Government, senator-at-large
Eric Cheyfitz, English, senator
Abby Cohn, Linguistics, senator-at-large
Shelley Feldman, Developmental Sociology, senator
Martin Hatch, Music, senator
David Levitsky, Nutritional Sciences, senator
Risa Lieberwitz, ILR, senator-at-large
Vicki Meyers-Wallen, Biomedical Sciences, senator
Marilyn Migiel, Romance Studies, senator
Satya Mohanty, English, senator
Timothy Mount, AEM, senator
Carol Rosen, Linguistics, senator
Elizabeth Sanders, Government, senator