Windchill and

Class Cancellation

What Students, Staff, Parents, and Alumni Have to Say About January 29-31, 2019

**1. Student**

I pay way too much for school for class to be canceled because of windchill. I was perfectly capable of walking to class (and I live in the commons) the cost benefit analysis of canceling class more frequently should be seriously considered. This not an excuse to disrupt the course schedule, there are university students who commute for hours, and endure weather many times more severe than frozen wind-chill, in order to attend classes. This is ridiculous and I ask my opinion is considered.

**2. Student**

I thought the walk to class last week felt perfectly safe during the day. Walking home at night was less tolerable, but that was my choice to stay on campus late. 8:40am class felt fine to walk to – I just took the advice to wear 2 pants, 2 shirts, 2 hats, etc.

I support classes continuing to be held in these environments and for classes where participation is factored into the grade, teachers should be told to treat all absences on extreme weather days as excused absences so students aren’t directly penalized if they feel unsafe to walk.

You can also hold a “zoom” training session for all professors to be prepared to just teach virtually via zoom if the weather is truly unbearable.

**3. Student**

I do not think classes should have been cancelled. We all pay a ton of money for these classes and should be cancelling as few as possible. The weather was cold, but with a jacket and warm socks (~$100 total) the ~15 minute walk that most students make to campus, or taking the bus seems very reasonable. My face was exposed to the elements and I didn’t lose any pieces of it to the cold. If we had weather like Chicago where it was actually dangerous to step outside, then a closure should be considered.
I think it is fair to assume that most students have warm clothes, we are at Cornell! If it is the case that some students cannot afford winter clothes, the university should help provide students with the necessary clothes considering they probably need them even if temperatures do not drop below 0.
On days that were as cold as the one we had, maybe professors should be encouraged to find ways to live stream their classes (Nate Foster who teaches CS3110 held a Zoom video conference of the class that day) so that students who truly cannot make it to campus don’t miss out on material.
I think the push by students to cancel classes is ridiculous and hyperbolic, the conditions that we experienced were really not so extreme.

**4. Student**

While I appreciate your comment, I feel it is misguided. As it has been stated in multiple comments, the financial burden to buy the clothes needed for this kind of weather goes beyond what is capable for many. Your phrasing gives the impression that you are brushing off $100 with relative ease when $100 is quite a bit of money that some cannot afford to spend, especially with all the other associated costs of attending Cornell (e.g. printing, rent, food, textbooks, bus passes, etc.). While Cornell has some good-will programs in place to provide winter clothes, they do not go far enough nor would they help those students with other reasons for not being able to step outside, like common medical conditions such as asthma. We should not be forced to choose between our dinner or warm socks.

Furthermore, that you “didn’t lose any pieces of [your face] to the cold” is frankly a ridiculous metric to judge the severity of the weather. While it was not as cold as Chicago, -24ºF windchill can induce hypothermia and frostbite in under 5 minutes in unexposed skin. That is severe. Many of us from warmer climates, like California, are unprepared for conditions as severe as this. It is dangerous to assume most students would know what its like to have experienced weather like this.

I know that it is an inconvenience to cancel class and close campus, but for the safety of the students, faculty, and non-critical staff, it is imperative that Cornell revise its school cancellation policy to reflect a balanced and fair approach that is in-line with its peers in the Northeast.

Cornell: amend the school cancellation policy.

**5. Student**

Cornell’s accessibility has always been inadequate, and their accomodations for bad weather are non-existent. It was dangerous enough for able-bodied people to go to school, and for a lot of us disabled students, such was an impossible feat.
No matter how many times I took my inhaler, the air would tear up my throat, making me unable to breathe. The temperature was so bad, even a scarf did not help. I also have mobility issues, and many pathways and inclines were caked in ice. One of my classes that day takes you down an entire letter grade for missing two classes in a semester, but I had no choice but to turn around and go home. I have Reunaud’s as well, so I got frostbite in my toes and fingers, anyways, even with protection. We should not be forced to choose between our life and academics.

**6. Student**

I think the policy when you can get frostbite in 10-20 minutes should be that classes are at the very least not mandatory. This means teachers should post slides/notes and classes that take attendance should not take attendance. Making buses free doesn’t help because there are not enough buses to accommodate all Cornell students walking to class.

**7. Student**

An idiotic decision. With clear signs of extreme danger, a cancellation was not just warranted, but logical. I hope Martha learns that missing a day of class has never killed anyone, but the conditions of the last week killed at least 10. Unbelievable.

**8. Student**

I would cancel classes when we are under a dangerous windchill warning of negative 10 or below, because students and many staff members don’t know how to dress properly for that kind of cold. Not many people can afford the appropriate winter garments.

For those who have health issues that are exacerbated by the dangerously low wind chills, Cornell ought to offer them either the option to Zoom in for a class or excuse their absence without deducting points.

Additionally, Cornell does an awful job of plowing sidewalks so wheelchair users and people on crutches may opt out of going to classes. Sidewalks still had a lot of snow on them and were difficult to walk (near Stocking and Bradfield) on even for an able bodied person.

**9. Student**

I live in Risley Hall, and on Tuesdays and Thursdays, my first class is in Statler Hall. It’s not a terribly far walk, so I walked to class on Thursday. By the time I reached Uris Hall, I could barely feel my legs. Regardless of the fact that the windchill was not as low as expected, -10 degrees Fahrenheit is not a reasonable temperature to make students come out in. Yes, the TCAT was free that day, but it was free for everyone, so anyone trying to take advantage of that would have to wait on a very busy bus stop for a TCAT to come along and pray that it wasn’t full (spoiler alert: it was probably gonna be full). There are some things worth risking your life and (literally) limbs for. One day’s worth of classes is not one of them. When the windchill is below zero, that should be a good sign that people shouldn’t be going outside.

**10. Student**

I think it’s ridiculous how an IBM-funded president with a 20 second walk from her car to the building can be expected to make decisions for thousands of students who have to walk a mile or more to class. Why should this power be vested in the president?

**11. Student**

I believe that there are a number of students on this campus who do not know how to dress warmly enough for wind chill conditions or simply do not have appropriate clothing. For example, I am from Texas, which means most of my clothes were bought in Texas, where it doesn’t get very cold. Thus, my clothing is thinner than normal, so even two or three layers wasn’t enough to sufficiently protect myself against the wind this past week. While I do understand that there is a budget increase available for students from warmer climates, this does not help the week before a weather event like this occurs. Therefore, I believe that classes should be cancelled when temperatures and wind chill drop substantially below what Ithaca is used to, in order to protect students like me who simply do not have appropriate weather gear, to include students from warmer climates as well as freshmen who have not experience Ithaca winters yet.

Additionally, I believe that if a threat only applies to early morning and evening events, they should be cancelled instead of cancelling the entire day. Prelims can be moved and classes can be rescheduled, but a student shouldn’t have to choose between their safety and their grade in a class.

**12. Student**

It’s completely unreasonable to assume that every student has appropriate attire for windchills as cold as those we just experienced. Not every student here at Cornell can afford to pay for expensive winter jackets designed for that type of weather, and some cannot afford to purchase bus passes that they may only use once or twice in an event like this. Even with free TCAT bus rides, most buses are full, making it impossible to get to class on time without using outside sources such as Uber, which can surge to as much as $30 for one ride. Additionally, more affordable housing tends to be located further from campus, giving some students a walk that is close to 30 minutes. This proves dangerous in windchill conditions of -20 or below. For a school that claims to be inclusive and understanding of all backgrounds and socioeconomic statuses, it was extremely disappointing to see the administration blatantly disregard these considerations when making their decision last week.

**13. Student**

I think it’s pretty self explanatory. If scientists say we could die within ten minutes of being outside, then cancel classes. It’s really not that difficult to comprehend.

**14. Student**

If the windchill and inclement weather pose such a barrier to students for getting to class the university should coordinate with shuttle services to ensure all students can make it to class safely and warmly.

**15. Student**

getting to class on time is not more important than my livelihood and health

**16. Student**

I think having class without adequate amounts of on campus transportation provided by Cornell was extremely negligent and irresponsible. In addition to falling on uncleared snow during my commute to class, I was so cold that I couldn’t even focus.

Despite all of that, I would find it reasonable to have class of Martha Pollack was seen spending time outdoors on campus, and walking between classes from north or west campus like we were all expected to.

**17. Student**

I think that keeping classes open during the January 29-31, 2019 weather event was the right decision. I can only speak from my experience, but I just threw on an extra layer and continued to bike to class as normal. For non-bikers, I think the city’s decision to make busses free was a great decision.

The only way I think the university’s response could have been improved is to stress the importance of wearing layers in order to keep warm (not just one big coat).

**18. Student**

What was the material your layers were made of? Can you share tips how you accomplished this amazing feat of biking in -20/-30 wind-chill? Do you think students who haven’t grown up in cold climates even know \*what\* to wear as “layers” or have the capacity to buy Canada Goose or Patagonia items? If Cornell cannot guarantee and/or educate every student (especially international and non-cold climate natives), then resources need to be invested in ensuring everyone has the right knowledge, financial ability, and awareness. I

**19. Student**

Students don’t actually think class should be cancelled. I submit this reddit thread as evidence: <https://www.reddit.com/r/cornell/comments/alwdb1>

**20. Student**

On my walk back from Statler to collegetown on 1/30 and 1/31, my fingers were freezing through my gloves. It was very painful.

**21. Student**

We cannot assume that all students have quality winter clothing that can protect them. While some students have no problem with this, winter coats are expensive and many students are forced to wear clothing that does not protect them effectively. Forcing students to go to class in intense cold makes it more difficult and potentially dangerous for students of a lower socioeconomic background and is thus classist.

**22. Student**

The cold greatly affected my asthma. I had to make a 15-20 minute walk to class due to an attendance policy that would otherwise affect my grade. I ended up having an asthma attack induced by the cold, dry air, and focusing in class was incredibly difficult afterwards.

**23. Student**

It was extremely cold, quite inhumane to make students walk in that weather when schools in Ithaca and the North East shut down. I could not feel my hands for 2 hours after coming home. Even though the TCAT was kind enough to be free, there werent enough buses for students.
Cornell needs to think about their students for once.
Cornell could consider doing web videos of lectures or something.

**24. Student**

I was extremely disappointed when school wasn’t cancelled and was appalled at the fact that I had to go to class. I wore 6 layers and yet my face could not be covered and so I could not feel my face by the time I got to my destination. I understand there was no snow however for the safety of your students this needs to be addressed. Thank you

**25. Student**

Cornell is the worst Ivy-League not only at academics but also in caring about student’s healths

**26. Student**

I was taking the bus back home but it was 20 minutes late. I was out in a -4 degrees weather, but feels like -24 degrees with the wind chill. I now have a cold and a fever. I was planning on taking the bus to avoid being out in the cold. I also lost feeling of my fingers and almost got frostbites.

**27. Student**

Same here.

**28. Student**

I think it is unfair to except all students to be prepared to have clothing that can protect them from such dramatic temperatures, especially those coming from homes with warmer climates and not having the financial recourses to go out and buy more clothes when wind-chill reaches dangerous temperatures. I also think it is extremely unfair to make us choose between our safety and our grades. Many messages told us to stay inside whenever possible and if it was unsafe for us to go to class stay inside; however at the same time since class was not canceled, by staying in the shelter of our dorms, and not walking across campus in the minus 20\* weather, we would have lost points and valuable instruction in all of our classes.
The message from the university was basically if it gets worse; we will cancell. However since the media and weather showed horrifyingly cold temperatures, it gave us little way to reasonably prepare because we did not know if we were going to need to go to class or not. I think most students completely understand that cancelling class is a burden on all parties involved, however the safety of everyone should be considered above all else.

**29. Student**

The climatological record should be consulted. It shows that Ithaca experiences between 1-3 days on average EACH YEAR with wind chills lower than what were experienced last week. Should classes be cancelled for an occurrence that occurs in a northern climate that frequently. The Ithaca observation during Friday morning showed wind chills that were only one degree warmer than on Thursday morning. Should classes have been cancelled then as well?

**30. Student**

Wind chill is based on a number of assumptions that are generally ignored, and also are not usually faced by students going to class. For example, it assumes no impact from the sun – a clear night sky. It also assumes no mitigation from structures like buildings or trees. It also calculates the effect of wind on bare skin, specifically the face.
<https://www.weather.gov/safety/cold-wind-chill-chart>
Wind chill is a useful concept, but it might not correspond to “real feel”.

I walked to campus (1.5 miles) and found it cold, but if I moved quickly I was able to keep warm. I did not wear specialized clothing, just several layers.

**31. Alum**

Seems like the only way out is to sue Martha Pollack & co. I graduated a few years ago and nothing has changed. January 2014 polar vortex brought -40 F windchill and we were required to go to classes.
I think this university does not care about its students or whatsoever. I’ve seen that Martha Pollack denied having a mental health care center a few months ago and now making students go to classes in -40 F windchill weather. Unacceptable.
Sure, it is expensive to shut the university for a day or two, but come on, healths of the staff and students healths are in risk.
I sincerely believe that the university will not learn till the university starts paying damages to the students and stafff from lawsuits.
Let’s all raise a fund together to take down Cornell’s broken rule of putting students in danger. We need a lawsuit not a faculty bureaucracy based on student recommendations. Students (10,000+) recommended on change.org to close the university; seems like you listened by not closing the university. I don’t think anything will happen from this, we need lawsuits against this atrocity.

**32. Student**

With the tech we have available we should be able to hold a class or two over zoom when the weather is bad. I know for some classes, particularly the flipped ones, it may not be ideal; but having a platform to use as a safety net seems like a good idea. I would imagine every instructor and student could suffer through a remote lecture or two in the name of safety. That would require some mechanism to get the meeting set up. I for one, have been in zoom before, but don’t know how to set it up. Maybe each class can have a zoom setup at the beginning of each term, so all that people just have to join in from a pre-established link. Does Canvas have this feature too? My thoughts.

**33. Student**

I appreciate that this is happening and I like that data has been included to help inform our decision. Before I offer my opinion I’d like to make a couple comments about the data.

Firstly, the Wind Chill chart is based on a model of the human face (assuming face at 5ft off the ground) and time-to-hypothermia. Do extremities (toes and fingers) reach hypothermia more quickly or slowly than the face? Given that this is based on the face being 5ft off the ground should we slightly adjust listed temperatures for taller & shorter people who might be more exposed or is the difference negligible?

Secondly, is it reasonable to consider students buying additional clothing for extreme weather periods an undue burden given the less-than-stable financial situation of many students? What is the coldest temperature the university feels it can expect its students to come prepared for given reasonable expectations about Ithaca’s climate? I genuinely don’t know the answer to these two questions and my intention is not imply any preference to the affirmative or negative potential answers, but simply to offer that they might be important additional questions to ask.

Opinion starts here:
Given that Cornell’s campus is large, many students do not have bus passes (and those that I know that do find them inefficient), and that cutting through buildings is not always possible or a good policy for the university, classes that occur in temperatures on the Wind Chill Chart that cause frostbite in 30 minutes or less should be cancelled. Additionally, any temperatures that directly border where the 30 minute-to-frostbite section begins should also be cancelled. Many walks to class at Cornell can take upwards of 30 minutes for healthy students, much less those with sports or non-sports related injuries who have not registered for CU-lift because they felt their injury was not debilitating enough under normal conditions or did not feel they would qualify. Not to mention students that have any type of illness, permanent or significant disability, or other conditions for which a reasonable person would not consider them to be “100%”.

That being said, especially for the most recent period, I do not see a reason to cancel full days of class. Simply cancel classes that occur within 30 minutes of any projected temperature as listed in my previous paragraph (to allow for that crucial commute to and from). I believe that, under this proposed policy, the Cornell community would have experienced a delayed opening or two and perhaps an early closing or two during the most recent cold snap. Temperatures in this extreme range are not common at Cornell and such a policy would not place an undue burden on the University as far as I am concerned.

Thank you for hearing from your community and I look forward to communication regarding the result of this opportunity!

Brian Forness

**34.**

The way I see it is that this is more of a PR issue than an ethical or safety one. I don’t think that people will be in much danger going to class in cold weather, but they have legitimate evidence that it could possibly be dangerous. Cornell is notoriously bad at looking like they care about their students. It kind of sounds like a no-brainer to let the students win once in a while to not further hurt the reputation of the school. I suggest that you stop caring about what you think is best and just cancel class if people have evidence of potential harm.

**35.**

These people are being whiny as all frick.

**36. Student**

Students need to own clothing appropriate to the place they live. The cost of a winter coat able to handle the recent weather does not need to be high. Canceling classes is not fair to students who have done this reasonable preparation. Class should be canceled only for extraordinary weather that students cannot be expected to be ready for. A wind chill of -35 or lower would be a reasonable point at which to cancel classes.

**37.**

If the weather poses a major health and/or safety risk for any Cornell community members (i.e., students, staff, faculty, and administrators), then Cornell needs to do the right thing in delaying or canceling classes. However, the University needs to provide messages that show compassion to all community members rather than to suggest that the well-being of certain individuals are more valued than others. The reality is that the University needs all of its members to operate effectively. If we truly want to reflect an inclusive environment, we need to ensure that not only do our words but also our actions reflect such a commitment. We can and need to do better in this area by avoiding unsensitive messages that do not promote a real sense of community.

**38. Faculty**

I am a faculty member who walks about a mile to campus in all weather. Despite the fact that I am outfitted for theupstate NY winter, I was quite concerned about the safety of making the trek in the dangerous wind-chills. Every time the city schools cancel for weather and Cornell stays open it puts a lot of pressure on faculty and staff with children, who need to make difficult decisions about the safety and care of children in extreme weather. I understand that making decisions about the safety of K-12 students in a partially rural district is different from the safety concerns for 18-22 year olds who generally live close to campus. However, I would encourage Cornell to have a conversation with the superintendent of schools to clarify the ICSD policies and their decision tree regarding cold weather cancellations, and keep it in mind as Cornell forges its own policies.

**39.**

The comments on here are almost too silly to believe. This was not horrible. Just dress appropriately. If you do not have clothes appropriate to the weather of upstate NY as some on here have complained, perhaps you should have gone to school elsewhere. Americans really are becoming only suited to being inside. In the winter, it’s too cold. In the summer, it’s too hot. Ridiculous.

**40**. **Student**

It’s fine to have classes in the insane cold, but it’d be nice if the Cornell store sold cheap crappy gloves and scarves so I don’t have to bus to Target to save a buck.

**41. Faculty**

The posted questions are very student-centered. University should further take into account the health of faculty who have to drive or travel long distances to teach and whether such weather limits the option for childcare for faculty with kids. T

**42. Student**

After waiting 15 minutes in the cold with a group of ~15 for the bus from Rockefeller to RPCC, only one person was let on the bus as the bus was already full. I could not feel my legs during the walk from Rockefeller to the bridge. By the time I crossed the bridge, feeling had returned, but only in the form of sharp pain. Every step I took was extremely painful, and I had to step into the Martin T Yang visitor center for 10 minutes to defrost and deal with the pain in my legs.

**43. Student**

A lot of instructors have mandatory attendance policies with steep penalties. Some of them are even adamant against posting any, if most, material from class online (for purposes of reusing them in subsequent semesters), making attendance to class mandatory by other means.
I think that the university should be willing to cancel classes at temperatures that pose a risk to frostbite within 20 minutes or less. However, I also think that there should be policy that requires instructors to be more flexible to student needs at these times. Some of them cannot relate to the life of an undergraduate student here, which involves our frequent exposure to the cold in our commute to classes. I think you should also consider that going in and out of these temperatures all day can take an extreme toll on our bodies. At the very least, prelims should be rescheduled if they are to occur under these conditions to allow students the opportunity to take care of their health without such severe academic penalties.

Additionally, I would like you to consider that not only do the temperatures pose a risk, but trying to walk in the dark, on steep inclines while sheets of ice cover the ground and we are trying to protect our faces, can increase the risk of physical injury. The wind in our eyes can impede visibility as well. I know that I am not the only person to have fallen on the slope.

**44.**

Normally I’m fine with Cornell’s reluctance to close, but it felt like -23 with wind chill and that’s genuinely dangerous to be walking in

**45. Student**

I am completely disgusted by Cornell’s lack of consideration for both students’ health and utter ignorance towards socioeconomic limitations. Not everyone can afford to layer themselves in expensive jackets or thermal garments. I wore two pairs of socks, 3 layers for both my torso and legs, coverings for my face and hands. Yet my 24 min walk back to my dorm resulted in near numbness and severe headaches despite my extensive coverage. To expect that kids who may not have or can afford such accessories go to class is just a negligent action made by a so called inclusive school. We get it, you lose money when classes are cold but it really shows that the care towards students is no better than what a multinational corporation has for its workers, nothing supercedes the bottom line dollar. The fact that lawyers had to be consulted to safeguard the school from lawsuits for harm such as frostbite really shows the robotic mentality of administration. If you’re going to be so mechanistic, then be honest and tell the world that universities are a business and education for all is and was never a priority. Any person any study = any dollar.

It should be straightforward. If there is a frostbite warning, do not have physical classes. Offer at least online recordings or video streaming options if it’s really necessary. Students are hostages to this administration and they know it.

**46.**

The safety of students, faculty and staff is paramount. If wind chill is dangerous, close the university. Period. Some missed instruction is not worth a life. The Northeast Climate Center is on campus for goodness sake. You have total access to the information needed to make the decision. Use it.

**47. Student**

The icy conditions and prolonged exposure to below 0 temperatures pose a serious risk to students and faculty. I would say most students have at least a 10-20 minute walk to class, which can be physically hazardous in extremely cold temperatures. Many of my fellow students opted not to go to morning classes (before 11 am) because the windchill was below -20. I hope that in the future a delayed opening or canceling of classes will be implemented.

**48.**

It is incredibly unsafe for students and faculty to risk their physical health to attend class. While attending classes are important, the faculty should have the ability to accommodate the students’ learning process if it is unsafe for them to go outside in hazardous weather conditions.

**49. Alum**

I’ll start by disclosing that I’m an alumnus of Cornell University (2015), not a current student. I currently reside in Chicago, Illinois where the windchill on Wednesday and Thursday reached around -50 in some parts of the area. Every single college and university in the area closed for these two days. Even most businesses in the area closed (my own office required its employees to work from home). I’ve seen first hand how bad these temperatures can be, as three people in the area died as a result of being out in the cold.

After hearing the windchill in Ithaca reached -30 I was disappointed to hear that my alma mater remained open during this potentially life threatening period of cold weather. It’s almost sadistic to send an email to the student body detailing the risks associated with being in extreme cold temperatures for long periods of time and still require them to come to class, knowing fully well most students are a 10+ minute walk to anywhere on campus. To answer the “when would be an appropriate time to cancel class?” prompt: if you’re sending out an email like that, you’ve answered your own question. No class, quiz or prelim is worth putting students at a serious risk to their health.

**50. Student**

I am from Florida……………. Forcing me to go outside when frostbite can be contracted in around 10 minutes is difficult for me……………..

Thanks…………

Much love

**51. Student**

It should be assumed that some students will have to walk at least 30 minutes outside because bus capacity is not sufficient to get everyone to class at peak time. Therefore, classes should be canceled if doing so would be dangerous due to frostbite. If risk would only be in the morning and evening, then allow day classes to remain.

**52. Student**

For my high school in PA, typically -25 or lower was a cancellation. But since so many people walk to class at Cornell for possibly up to 30 minutes one-way (the amount of time it takes to possibly get frostbite in such weather), classes should probably be cancelled -20 or lower.

**53. Student**

I think that -50 degrees F with windchill, or -20 F without is a reasonable line to draw for cancellation. I grew up in an area slightly colder than Ithaca, and in my experiance if it is any colder than that, it becomes difficult to dress properly. Covering all skin and protecting your lungs become importiant at those temperatures, and this makes going outside miserable. I think for warmer temperatures (above the double digit negatives), it makes far more sense to educate students on how to properly dress. On the day people were calling for classes to be cancelled, I saw people not wearing gloves, not wearing hats, wearing high heels without socks (or other thin footwear), and wearing single-layer yoga pants or jeans or suit pants. This sort of dress is dangerous even when it is, say, 10 degrees. I suspect most people don’t even understand how importiant leg insulation is, or know how they might go about protecting their nose or cheeks from the wind. Perhaps this could be incorporated into freshman orientation.
-Scott Bollt

**54. Staff**

We need to take into account that there are disabled staff members too, like me.

**55.**

The message it sends to students and staff when IC (who has a smaller campus) closes and Cornell doesn’t, is that the administration doesn’t care enough about either. The news was indicating that if you did not have to be out that day, you shouldn’t have been. The free TCAT buses were not viewed as a precautionary measure when the majority of them do not and cannot get you straight to your destination. The size of our campus, regardless of the available buses, requires people to walk. Students and staff alike should not have been required to be out in wind chills that were of this magnitude. It is problematic when people think “the world must be coming to an end” when Cornell shuts down.

**56. Student**

No learning is worth getting injured or sick(er) over. Though I love cold inhospitable weather personally, expecting students to travel and function in such weather is just extreme.

Our institution does important work, but very few of us have the level of responsibility equivalent to emergency room surgeons or cardiac surgeons. Missing a day or more of class due to temperatures that are tens of degrees below freezing & are more adequately rated on the Kelvin scale is not the end of the world and probably contributes to the overall wellness of our community.

I don’t think our founders we thinking any student any study in any weather =)

Marcus

**57.**

I think Cornell has a lot to consider when it comes to closing the school. We should look at other school’s policies when it comes to this. If someone can get frostbite under 10 minutes, school should be canceled as it takes more than 10 minutes to get around campus, even if you go inside a building. We only get 15 minutes to get to the next class. Even for staff that park and then wait for a bus to get to campus. Road conditions should also be taken into account especially during the morning/night commute. We should consider delay/early closing so that folks get home on time while theres daylight. During this past event, the roads were icy which is dangerous for those that commute into Ithaca, even worse at night. Most children had no school which meant that staff had to find a babysitter so they could come to work. There were a lot of folks that worked from home during this day (thanks to bosses that are flexible and understanding). If Cornell cancels classes, it should close completely as it will be easier for staff since they won’t have to commute or find a babysitter. We should also look into using zoom for classes so they won’t be canceled and folks can avoid traveling through campus. Another option would be to add more buses so that the wait time is reduced. Maybe change the routes that run on campus to make sure we have enough service to get everyone where they need to go without freezing. We also need bus shelters with heat lamps throughout campus so that folks don’t completely freeze out there while waiting for a bus. We should try to make accommodations so that everyone has access to their education regardless of the weather conditions. I would look into how many folks took the bus during this event to see if ridership increased. Maybe Cornell should construct more tunnels throughout campus. I think it’s important to remember that not everyone has the means to have protective clothing available for these types of weather conditions. Not everyone can afford to come here and some bearly get by (which is why we ongoing initiatives to make sure folks have enough to eat). We should consider having a minibus via Cornell health to get folks who have health issues that intensify with the cold so that they can get around campus.

**58. Staff**

As staff at Cornell, I often feel that the campus doesn’t care about employee safety when dangerous weather hits. I have seen justifications for keeping the university open that students mostly live within walking distance of campus, ignoring concerns of faculty and staff to be able to get to work safely. I see a similar concern with the proposal of having days classes are cancelled while the university remains open for extreme windchill.

Some employees must contend with the same issues as students in the extreme cold, including walking to campus, walking between buildings on campus, and in some cases doing work outside. Additionally, with the extremely limited parking situation for employees, there can be considerable distance between where someone works and parks.

While it is reasonable to expect students and employees to have basic protection from the cold, some of the wind chills in question are beyond what anyone should be expected to contend with in this area.

Additionally, when Cornell remains one of the very few places open while other schools, daycare, etc. are closed around town, employees can be in a very difficult situation in finding childcare. I think the status of local schools should be a more serious factor when considering whether to close Cornell.

**59. Student**

In the extreme weather we recently experienced, shuttle services/a clearly communicated shuttle service plan to add to bus transport would have been extremely helpful. It was great that TCAT provided free service, but that had the problematic effect of leaving many regular riders stranded out in the cold due to full buses. Students should also have been able to use shuttles for any longer walks between classes. And I second the comments about not just providing added financial aid for students from warmer climates (I believe this is already done), but providing training/additional info about layering/most effective (and yet cost effective) ways to handle extreme cold. Maybe RAs can assist with this?

**60.**

Just as the university supplies free bottled water at Commencement when it is hot and sunny, so too might it provide free (or highly subsidized) ski-type masks via the campus store when it is very cold and windy. Just a thought.

**61.**

Not everybody has the proper resources and winter clothing to wear in this below freezing temperatures. Additionally, not everybody live on campus due to not guarantee housing for those past freshmen year. Thus many can have a walk of 20-40 minutes, and with the wind chill of -20, frostbite can happen in 10 minutes, which means frost bite can happen on the way walking to class.

**62. Student**

It was really unreasonable for Cornell not to cancel classes that day, I really don’t know what the Cornell faculty was thinking in continuing classes even though more than half the student population signed a petition to stop classes.

As a senior at Cornell, I’ve witnessed cancellations before, and just because there is no snow does not mean that it was okay to have class when frostbite is caused easily in less than 20 minutes outside in this weather.

I am an engineering student living on north, with the bus stops closest to me at least 5 minutes away with some more wait time due to usual bus delays. Even if the buses were free, students cannot avoid time walking to and from classes or even waiting on the bus.

I understand that many students think we pay too much for classes to be cancelled, but I would say that I wouldn’t risk permanent damage to my body over money.

Cornell also released statements saying that if we thought it would be unsafe outside, we should act according to what is safe. If I were to stay indoors because I deemed it unsafe to go outside, why is the quality of my education at risk because we couldn’t cancel school? If I don’t go to school, I’m missing out on a topic that the professor could reorganize to teach us in a more efficient way if we were to cancel classes. If I do go to classes I risk my health.

I thought more highly of an institution that is so well known and one I cherish as my alma mater, but it is clear that they do not think the health of their students is as important.

**63.**

I think that Cornell should cancel classes if the temperature is projected to reach -5 degrees Fahrenheit (or less) with the wind chill.

**64.**

Just as other severe weather events, wind chill as we recently experienced should be seriously and compassionately considered for altering University operations for students, faculty and staff. It was clear that exposure was difficult at best to protect a human being for more than mere minutes, and that being outdoors under normal operations would be unsafe for all. Not sure about the thinking by the team that deals with weather issues, why they could not have decided for safety reasons to appropriately engage a weather safety protocol. ~ Ruth, staff

**65.**

I think Cornell should promote the wellbeing and safety of our students, faculty, and staff.

How about planning for extreme weather days in class syllabi? This way faculty can adapt proactively to weather conditions. On average, I would think planning for a couple days of extreme weather per semester would be a safe choice.

I would also encourage better communication about weather events with the larger Cornell community. I don’t believe I have received any warnings during the last weather event.

**66.**

I think there should be measures in place so that teachers could teach students electronically via Zoom or Skype in cases of extreme weather.

**67.**

I would strongly support a wind chill university closing/cancellation policy. I think we should also strongly encourage staff and faculty to allow for online alternatives such as holding a lecture via Zoom – you can take attendance!

Buses are overloaded in extreme temperatures and oftentimes even waiting for the bus for 10-15 minutes can be brutal.

Extreme temperatures are also more likely for after dark so we should focus first on those conflicts.

**68.**

I think it is extremely difficult to create a policy around windchill. It’s impossible to know if all students have appropriate clothing for ANY type of weather let alone dangerous wind chills. Many of our students have walks of at least 25 minutes to their classes.
It is important to empower our faculty to make reasonable accommodations for these situations. That said, one of my faculty sent the following message to their students the day before that incredibly frigid day last week:

“Just a heads-up that as long as the university is open I plan to be in the classroom and tell you all about biological perspectives on self-regulation. That being said, I realize that the predicted wind-chill is -20F for class time.
Therefore, I will record the lecture (just the animated slides + my voice) on Zoom and post it on Canvas afterwards. No guarantees regarding sound quality. Also, listening to the recording won’t be as engaging as the real lecture and you’ll miss out on interactive parts.
So I hope to see most of you in class tomorrow, but if you have a long way to campus this gives you an alternative option.
Stay warm!
My faculty reported that there were about 1/3 of the students attending the following day.
All best and good luck with the policy,
Marianne

**69.**

Cancellation of classes does not affect most staff positions on campus, and most staff are not expected to walk between locations throughout the day. I don’t think that this was an issue from a staff point of view. I think that shutting down campus completely (no work day) definitely would have been unnecessary.

1. Campus needs improved transit & more buses to decrease wait times – is there a possibility of returning to a Cornell shuttle system throughout campus only to supplement TCAT services? What about enclosed/heated bus stops?

2. Advertisement and encouragement of students to use services such as Cornell Thrift / Ezra’s Exchange to help supplement winter wardrobes both with donating and receiving seasonally appropriate clothing items – [https://www.sustainablecampus.cornell.edu](https://www.sustainablecampus.cornell.edu/)

**70. Parent**

There were not enough TCAT buses. My son, couldn’t get on the bus, because it was filled to capacity. He wound up missing class. (It would have been an additional 20 minute walk outside, in addition to the time he waited for the bus.) It was too far to walk with that windchill factor. More buses are needed on days that cold.

**71.**

The offer of free bus services for the day was a reasonable one, but this led to bus delays and full buses that did not alleviate the central issue of being outside. Further, it is unreasonable to expect that all students are equally prepared to handle the extreme weather conditions safely, when winter-wear is expensive and not necessarily something everyone will already have. I liked the ideas to host zoom lectures or count absences as excused if students felt unsafe getting to class.

**72.**

It was certainly cold, but I did not think it was as windy as forecast, and with appropriate gear the cold was certainly bearable for the 10-15 minute walks I had outside.

We’re in upstate NY, and we do have subzero temperatures usually a few days a year. Somehow we need to be able to deal with that — and help our students deal with that — without closing. We did not approach the level of windchill that the Midwest faced; if we did, I would have been in favor of closing.

**73. Student**

It’s time to start treating your students like adults. After graduation, if inclement weather were to impede a full-time professional’s commute to work, arrangements could easily be made to either work from home or take the day off. It seems incomprehensible that the same flexibility cannot be expected from Cornell. Practice a policy of empathy towards your students, many of whom have long commutes on foot. A windchill of -20 degrees Fahrenheit should qualify as an extreme weather event and students should at least be given the option of not attending class in those circumstances regardless of what their classes’ attendance policies state. I think it is ridiculous for a university I pay money to attend to offer me less flexibility (in being forced to attend mandatory classes under threat of grade penalization) than a potential employer who pays me to be in the office. Perhaps university administrators who have never worked outside academia will not have experienced the flexibility and empathy most employers offer but those who have should notice this disparity.

**74. Student**

No problem with the cold. Classes should only be canceled if the road conditions are too dangerous for students to walk to class. Extreme cold does not make the cut. We all have coats. I wore, A shirt, sweater, inner coat, and outer coat and was perfectly fine.

I support classes continuing to be held in these environments and for classes where participation is factored into the grade, teachers should be told to treat all absences on extreme weather days as excused absences so students aren’t directly penalized if they feel unsafe to walk.

Classes should always be heald in this scenario, the choice should be given to the students to attend because we pay a huge amount of money for our Cornell Education.

**75. Student**

Can Cornell’s extensive relationship with the Zoom software extend to student-professor classrooms? What if students download the software at the start of the semester and the professor gives students a chance to stay home and Zoom into their lecture/discussion instead? This remediation may help support some students with early morning/late evening classes and it could also support students who aren’t able to obtain safe winter gear to be out in dangerous temperatures.
-Serena Stern

**76. Student**

My personal experience was this: I was worried about the temperature due to all of the hype from students, and so I wore an underarmor shirt, and two pairs of socks. Aside from this I was wearing what I normally wear during the winter: a winter coat, sweatshirt, and sweatpants. I ended up not being very cold while outside, even after 10 minutes of walking or waiting for a bus at different points in the day. Another strategy I used was to make sure I had enough time to stop indoors briefly if I was feeling too cold. Because of this preparation, I was not too uncomfortable at any point during the day.

Overall my experience was fine, and I was fine with classes going on. I feel that the weather itself did not warrant a class cancellation during the day (when I went outside). I am surprised that so many students did not prepare before coming to school for the possibility of very cold weather at Cornell. Because it seems many students are unprepared for this type of weather, I am in support of some type of eduction about how to deal with the cold weather, regardless of whether the class cancellation policy changes.

If the weather were dangerous to be in for more than say, 5 minutes, I would be very concerned if classes were open, but with a warning of “frostbite after 30 minutes” I have no personal issues with there being classes, especially because there are so many heated buildings where it is possible to stop if needed.

My morning walk to Baker Hall was about 10-15 minutes, for reference.

**77. Staff**

What would a no-classes-but-university-open situation look like, especially for staff?

If the weather is too dangerous for students, it should be too dangerous for staff. Their safety and health should not be valued any less than the students’. Keep in mind, due to inadequate parking and busing schedules – free buses don’t help when there are long wait times, and buses may not even stop because they are full – many staff members have to walk almost as far as students do in order to reach their building.

Personally, I got to work fine despite the cold, so I don’t know if this specific circumstance necessitated closing campus. But I do want to emphasize that staff should be valued no less than students; if it’s not safe for them, it’s not safe for us, either.

**78.**

This whole debate is ridiculous. It was cold, yes, but we live in a climate with seasonal variation and students should be prepared for it. The “Polar Vortex” resulted in a cold morning, but temperatures warmed significantly by the afternoon. Maybe it’s because I’m from Canada, but people need to stop complaining and deal with the situation. Their future employers won’t appreciate requests to not come in because it gets a little chilly.

**79. Student**

I have a few points to bring up…

1) Let’s stop pretending that a single day of classes is so important. It is not. If you think it is, you should go to lectures on a normal day and see how many empty seats there are and how many people aren’t paying attention. Tests can be rescheduled.

2) Why did all other schools in Ithaca cancel school? I understand why we might have school when it is snowy while others do not; perhaps we have better snow clean-up procedures. However, there is absolutely no difference between the wind-chill that Ithaca College students and Cornell students experience. It is a level playing ground. If multiple other institutions call it dangerous enough to cancel due to windchill, then Cornell should too.

3) Not everyone has a $1000 Canada Goose jacket made for this weather!!! I am a student on nearly full financial aid but thank goodness my parents were able to find me a nice winter coat on clearance before coming to Cornell. If I hadn’t found a winter coat that is actually warm, I would have been so miserable. I can’t imagine how many students there are who don’t have the resources to be equipped for this weather. It is so unbelievably inconsiderate to force this upon students. Also, you can’t use the excuse that “students will not be penalized for not going to class.” This is a ridiculous excuse. If class is held, they are bound to miss out on something that another more privileged student who was able to go to class received.

Please, stop acting like one day of classes is actually that important. We all know it isn’t. Health matters more than anything.

**80. Staff**

It’s not only students who have to walk across campus, staff do too. If you are going to cancel classes, but make staff report, then transportation should be more lenient with appeals on tickets. I took a chance on getting a ticket because I felt it was too cold to walk across campus. When I appealed, they denied it saying inclement weather was not a good reason.

**81.**

I feel this issue is 3 fold – health/safety, attendance and participation. When there is a health/safety concern and it’s deemed unrealistic to require some/all students to report physically to class, I realize that attendance and participation is necessary/ideal – perhaps leaving it up to the professors to decide whether they want to offer the physical class &/or have an alternative option (ex: for staff that are interested in a meeting/presentation but not willing/able to attend physically, we often offer an option to view/participate via Zoom). Perhaps this (or something like it) can allow all students to be in attendance physically or remotely as well as the ability to participate – the class is still held but there are options on how a student can attend/participate – depending on the technology used, this could be trackable and thus meeting the needs of all – no rescheduling, all have access, etc…this discussion comes up a lot when discussing disability related accessibility but could apply to this situation as well