

January 25, 1999

To: Members of the University Faculty

From: University Faculty Committee -- Barry Carpenter, Kerry Cook, J. Robert Cooke, ex officio, Chair, Elizabeth D. Earle, David M. Galton, Risa Lieberwitz, Alan McAdams, Sally McConnell-Ginet, Vicki Meyers-Wallen, Kathleen Rasmussen, ex officio, Peter Schwartz

There have been numerous reports of harassment on campus since last October.* Many students of color report that they do not feel safe or respected. According to John Ford, the R.W. and E.C. Staley Dean of Students, the level of tension and fear on campus is greater than it has been for the last 25 years.

At least part of the problem seems to stem from the actions of a small group of people, and many of the incidents are under investigation. However, another element of the problem arises from the general "campus climate."

The University Faculty Committee, the elected executive committee that guides the Faculty Senate, encourages all faculty to play a leadership role in improving the environment for diversity at Cornell. We will bring a resolution before the Senate in February to affirm the faculty's concern and its intent to act. We are also developing ways in which we can act constructively to make the Cornell community more welcoming and respectful of all points of view and cultural experiences.

We want to make sure all faculty are aware of this challenge facing our community, so that we can begin addressing these issues immediately. To this end, we encourage you to make a special effort to insure a welcoming atmosphere for all students in your classes throughout the semester. Other actions underway include Cornell's participation on January 27 in the PBS interactive "town hall" meeting on "Racial Legacies and Learning: How to Talk About Race"; plans for a "Dialog on Campus Climate for Students: Diversity and Inclusion" in all departments; a "Book Review Forum" on March 17 to discuss the new book "Cornell '69: Liberalism and the Crisis of the American University" by Donald Alexander Downs, addressing issues raised at Cornell in the 1960s; and active participation by the Faculty Senate Committee on Affirmative Action in creating the restructured position of the Vice Provost to head efforts to increase faculty diversity.

If you have any ideas concerning the plans described above or additional ideas about how the faculty can help improve the environment for diversity at Cornell, please contact your department's senator(s), or any UFC member. If you have ideas regarding the restructuring of the Vice Provost position, you can also contact the Faculty Senate Committee on Affirmative Action (Clare Fewtrell, Chair, cmf3@cornell.edu).

*For further information about these incidents, see:

<<http://UniversityFaculty.cornell.edu/CAMPUSCLIMATE/ResourceDocuments.CC/ReportedIncidents.pdf>>.

<<http://UniversityFaculty.cornell.edu/CAMPUSCLIMATE/ResourceDocuments.CC/EducationalProgr.pdf>>.

.<<http://UniversityFaculty.cornell.edu/CAMPUSCLIMATE/ResourceDocuments.CC/LightingProjects.pdf>>.

