

Resolution in Support of Continued Employment for Cornell Staff during the Covid-19 Crisis

WHEREAS, during the Covid-19 pandemic, university staff have demonstrated resilience, ingenuity, and dedication;

WHEREAS, Cornell administration's recently announced financial plans addressing Covid-19-related budget shortfalls include the possibilities of layoffs or furloughs of university staff;

WHEREAS, loss of employment at Cornell would impose severe financial hardships on staff and their dependents;

WHEREAS, comparable employment elsewhere will not be available for staff, particularly in the conditions of high unemployment during the Covid-19 pandemic;

WHEREAS, layoffs or furloughs of staff will have a severely negative impact on the broader community, given Cornell's role as the primary employer in Tompkins County;

WHEREAS, significant staff layoffs during the financial downturn of 2008-09 damaged morale throughout the university, negatively affecting the character of the institution;

WHEREAS, preservation of employment of Cornell staff is essential to maintain the cooperative spirit that has sustained us thus far and is essential to our recovery;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that the Faculty Senate recognizes the vital role and contributions of university staff;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Faculty Senate urges the Cornell administration to commit to maintaining the employment of all current staff during the Covid-19 crisis;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Faculty Senate calls on the Cornell administration to respond to the current crisis with alternatives to layoffs or furloughs, including reassigning staff to positions that will meet the university's critical needs.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Faculty Senate encourages the Cornell administration to charge deans, faculty and staff to work collaboratively to maintain employment of all current staff, including devising adaptable, appropriate, and sustainable staff reassignments to carry the university through this crisis and continue its flourishing when it is over.

Faculty Cosponsors as of Early this Morning: 103 in total including 17 Senators

Buz M. Barstow	Department of Biological and Environmental Engineering	Virginia Doellgast	ILR School
Risa L. Lieberwitz	School of Industrial & Labor Relations	Jane-Marie Law	Asian Studies Dept
Joanie Mackowski	Department of English / Creative Writing	Raymond Craib	History
Richard F. Bense	Department of Government	Jim DelRosso	Cornell University Library
Carl Franck	Department of Physics	Maria Cristina Garcia	History and Latino Studies
Shannon Gleeson	School of Industrial & Labor Relations	Rebecca Slayton	Science & Technology Studies
Vanessa Bohns	School of Industrial & Labor Relations	Kate Bronfenbrenner	School of Industrial & Labor Relations
Allison Heinemann	School of Industrial & Labor Relations	Ifeoma Ajunwa	ILR School
Jill Frank	Department of Government	Neil Saccamano	Department of English
Matthew Evangelista	Department of Government	Sandra Babcock	Law School
Joseph Margulies	Department of Government and School of Law	Sally Klingel	ILR School
Wayles Browne	Department of Linguistics, emeritus	Olufemi Taiwo	Africana Studies
Lowell Turner	ILR School	Chris Schaffer	Biomedical Engineering.
Robert Smith	ILR School	TJ Hinrichs	History
Ben A. Rissing	ILR School	Marina Welker	Anthropology
Tristan Ivory	School of Industrial & Labor Relations	Kora Von Wittelsbach	Romance Studies
Tae-Youn Park	School of Industrial & Labor Relations	Itai Cohen	Department of Physics
Beth Lyon	Law School	Jane Wang	Department of Physics
Shimon Edelman	Psychology	Angela Cornell	Law School
Lee H. Adler	ILR School	Philip Krasielsky	Department of Physics

James A. Gross	ILR School	Mildred Sanders	emeritus, Dept. of Government
Aziz Rana	Law School	Christopher Way	Department of Government
Veit Elser	Department of Physics	Sol M. Gruner	Department of Physics
Erich Mueller	Department of Physics	Brad Ramshaw	Department of Physics
Rachel Bezner Kerr	Global Development	Dexter Kozen	Computer Science, Mathematics
Vilma Santiago-Irizarry	Anthropology	Nozomi Nishimura	Biomedical Engineering
Sunn Shelley Wong	English and Asian American Studies	Jan Lammerding	Biomedical Engineering
Julilly Kohler-Hausmann	History Department	Peter McMahon	Applied and Engineering Physics
Barbara Strupp	Division of Nutritional Sciences	Jonathan T. Butcher	Biomedical Engineering
Christina Homrighouse	ILR School	John S. L. Parker	Baker Institute for Animal Health
David A. Levitsky	Division of Nutritional Sciences	Benjamin D. Cosgrove	Biomedical Engineering
Stacey Langwick	Anthropology	Claudia Fischbach	Biomedical Engineering
Eric Cheyfitz	American Indian and Indigenous Studies Program	Bethany P. Cummings	Veterinary Medicine
Russell Rickford	History Department	Susan Daniel	Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering
Julia Chang	Department of Romance Studies	Rong Yang	Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering
Wendy Strobel Gower	ILR School	Thierry Toréa	Romance Studies, French
LaWanda Cook	ILR School	Jonathan Monroe	Comparative Literature
Anna Haskins	Sociology	Beth Miles	Performing & Media Arts
Linda Donahue	ILR School	Thomas P. Golden	ILR School
Christine Leuenberger	Science & Technology Studies	Sally McConnell-Ginet	Linguistics
Kate Griffith	ILR School	Jeremy Braddock	English
Claudia Verhoeven	History	Lyrae Van Clief-Stefanon	English / Creative Writing
Michael Gold	ILR School	Katja Nowak	Physics
Nerissa Russell	Anthropology	Tracy Hamler Carrick	Knight Writing Institute
Ileen A. DeVault	ILR School	Frank Wise	Applied and Engineering Physics
David A. Bateman	Department of Government	Brian D. Rudd	Microbiology and Immunology
Emily Zitek	ILR School	Susan Buck-Morss	Emeritus, Government
Estelle McKee	Law School	Diane Rubenstein	Government, American Studies, French Graduate Field
Darlene Evans	Knight Institute	Michelle T. Cox	Knight Writing Institute
Michael Ashkin	Art	Kate Navickas	Knight Institute for Writing in the Disciplines
George Hutchinson	English and Knight Institute	Brad Zukovic	Knight Institute for Writing in the Disciplines
Emily Fridlund	English / Creative Writing		

We deeply appreciate the efforts that the administration and the opening committees and the entire Cornell community have made and are making to preserve our university.

Reasons to Commit to Staff Employment

From “More People Will Be Fired in the Pandemic. Let’s Talk About It.”
New York Times, June 14, 2020, by Jennifer Senior:

Research by economists in England and Australia demonstrates that “It takes longer to adapt to the pain of unemployment than to losing a loved one.”

Layoffs “wound people not just economically, but emotionally and spiritually.”

“There’s a whole body of literature suggesting that layoffs don’t ultimately help the bottom line once the economy heats back up. Experienced and dedicated humans are hard to replace.”

“James Guthrie...associate dean at the school of business at the University of Kansas...[said]: Now ... is the time for every organization to express its values.”

Comments from Faculty Senate Webpage

June 22, 2020, 8:30pm, Anonymous:

Our staff provide essential functions that otherwise would need to be performed by faculty effort. In my department, staff also intrinsically sense and maintain academic department culture in ways busy faculty often neglect, and we function collectively better for it. I know I would not be able to write nearly as many grants, counsel students, and plan program without the essential help of each of the staff in my department. These support roles and the occasional corn hole/ice cream social they conceive/run on their own is well worth the fractional support each of us can give. No amount of automation can replace these roles, and faculty (bless us) will likely do a crappier job at it and still cost us these resources in time/money.

June 19, 2020, 10:20am, Anonymous:

Why can't we all be in this crisis together and share the burdens it is imposing? Can we all please consider whether as faculty we already are more comfortable economically than many other people Cornell employs? If so, then is not a little sacrifice for us worth the much more tremendous value and security it provides all others who are part of our team here at Cornell that help make the university function smoothly for all of us? It certainly seems like a moral, humane, compassionate, and ultimately beneficial thing to do for everyone and for the university as a whole. If we give a little now, we may get back much more later.

June 15, 2020, 10:56am, Anonymous:

As a longterm staff member, I want to thank the faculty involved in this for being our voice. The fact that the President and Provost can't even produce data on how many staff have already been laid-off/furloughed speaks volumes. They simply don't care. Temporarily cut salaries and temporarily stop retirement contributions, but give us all a guarantee that they will return to where they were when the crisis ends. We're all willing to do our part, but we need to keep our positions. This part of the state is an employment desert. For most of us, there's no where else to work.

Comments from Senate Cosponsors

Joanie Mackowski, English/Creative Writing:

If tenured faculty believe that staff layoffs are necessary to preserve our university, then I think we've already lost. Tenure isn't a mere privilege: it's an obligation. As researchers and scholars, we work in the service of truth. Tenure exists to protect the discovery and expression of truth from abuses of power. There's nothing true or just about terminating staff employment, and without good cause, in the midst of this pandemic. If we worry about temporary pay cuts while rationalizing that staff layoffs are somehow unavoidable, then it's no wonder that people in the U.S. are losing confidence in higher education. To survive this crisis, we must support each other and demonstrate our values.

“[T]enure at colleges and universities will not survive...unless it is tied to the broader moral agenda of defending some kind of job security for everyone, given how important that is for human well-being, inside academe and out.”

-- Brian Leiter, professor of jurisprudence, director of the Center for Law, Philosophy, and Human Values, University of Chicago. Quoted from “Academic Ethics: Rethinking the Justification of Tenure,” Chronicle of Higher Education, January 17, 2017

Buz Barstow: Department of Biological and Environmental Engineering:

America has always been an individualistic country, but I think if you look back at the historical record, it's gone through waves of individualism and solidarity. For much of the past 40 years, we've been in this hyper-individualist state, where it's been everyone for themselves. I think this state is beginning to end, and I think our students really want it to end.

Risa L. Lieberwitz: School of Industrial & Labor Relations:

Cornell has many alternatives for addressing the current public health crisis and its financial impact. It is wrong -- and unnecessary -- to pit faculty, students and staff against each other. Consistent with Cornell's "core values" that President Pollack articulated, deans, faculty, and staff can work together to choose principled, humane, and feasible alternatives to address the university's financial concerns, without layoffs or furloughs. These alternatives include hiring freezes, construction pauses, borrowing against the endowment, and staff reassignments.

Chris B. Schaffer: Meinig School of Biomedical Engineering:

The consequences of a generational crisis should not be borne so heavily by the most financially vulnerable members of the Cornell community. This has been recognized with the extraordinary commitment made to maintain current financial aid models for our students. It should also be recognized by protecting the employment of staff whose positions have been threatened by the crisis. Cornell community members -- past, present, and future -- should all bear some of the burden so that no dedicated Cornell employees are laid off due to the crisis.