

# Faculty Senate

November 8, 2023

ALL IN-PERSON ATTENDEES PLEASE SIGN-IN ON ONE OF THE SHEETS

ALL ZOOM ATTENDEES PLEASE SIGN-IN VIA THE CHAT

SENATORS: Name and Department

FACULTY GUESTS: Name and Department

NON-FACULTY GUESTS: Name and Affiliation

PRESS: Name and Affiliation

# Gayogóhó:nq' Land Acknowledgement

Cornell University is located on the traditional homelands of the Gayogóhó:nq' (the Cayuga Nation). The Gayogóhó:nq' are members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, an alliance of six sovereign Nations with a historic and contemporary presence on this land. The Confederacy precedes the establishment of Cornell University, New York state, and the United States of America. We acknowledge the painful history of Gayogóhó:nq' dispossession and honor the ongoing connection of Gayogóhó:nq' people, past and present, to these lands and waters.

This land acknowledgment has been reviewed and approved by the traditional Gayogóhó:nq' leadership.

## **HYBRID FORMAT**

In-person and remote attendance

## **ZOOM CAPTIONING**

Choose “**Live Transcription**” in the Zoom menu

## **TO SPEAK**

**2 minutes to pose a question or make a statement**

Identify yourself: First name, Last name and Department

**Zoom first** (Muted until called)

**Floor next** (to allow Senators to come up to the microphone)

**Back to Zoom**

**Back to Floor**

## **CHAT**

Want to attend to statements on the floor; **set to everyone**

Do not want to disadvantage in-person attendees; 2 minutes

**Please limit chat to sharing resources with each other**

**Will be published ‘as is’ publicly on DoF website after meeting**

## **RECORDING**

Started at 3:30PM

Audio and chat will be posted on agenda webpage after meeting

# **Approval of Zoom Transcription Minutes**

October 11, 2023

Unanimous consent requested

Raise hand (in-person or remote) for corrections only

# **President Martha Pollack**

Computer Science

# Senate Q&A

# **Senate Announcements and Updates**

Eve De Rosa, Dean of Faculty, Chair of the University Faculty Committee; Psychology  
Chelsea Specht, Associate Dean of Faculty, Chair of the Nominations and Elections  
Committee; Plant Biology

# Senate Announcements and Updates

- **Teaching-Track Title Taskforce (T4)**
- **Co-Chairs:**
  - **Michael Clarkson**, Computer Science, and **Charles Van Loan**, Computer Science, Emeritus, (Bowers CIS)
- **Committee members:**
  - **Lawrence E. Blume**, Information Science, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs (Bowers CIS)
  - **Susie Fubini**, Clinical Science, Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs (CVM)
  - **Sarah Giroux**, Global Development, Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and Strategic Programs (CALs)
  - **Fran Kozen**, Associate Director, Cornell Institute of Fashion and Fiber Innovation (CHE)
  - **Neema Kudva**, City and Regional Planning, Senior Associate Dean (AAP)
  - **Jeff Niederdeppe**, Communication, Senior Associate Dean of Faculty Development (Brooks SPP)
  - **Derk Pereboom**, Philosophy, Senior Associate Dean for Arts & Humanities (A&S)
  - **Suzanne Shu**, Marketing, Dean of Faculty and Research (SCJCB)
  - **Alan Zehnder**, Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering, Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs, (Engineering)
- **Faculty Senate Committee Feedback**
  - Education Policies Committee (EPC)
  - Academic Programs and Policies Committee (CAPP)
  - Academic Freedom and Professional Status of Faculty (AFPSF)



# Senate Announcements and Updates

- **Based on evidence-based proposal from Faculty Advisory Committee on Athletics and Physical Education (FACAPE), students will now have to meet the Red Cross swim competency standard**
  - 1. Step or jump into the water over your head.
  - 2. Return to the surface and float or tread water for one minute.
  - 3. Turn around in a full circle and find an exit.
  - 4. Swim 25 yards to the exit without stopping.
  - 5. Exit from the water. If in a pool, be able to exit without using the ladder.
- **Two votes in December on academic policy with feedback from Education Policies Committee (EPC) and the Academic Programs and Policies (CAPP) Faculty Senate committees:**
  - [Proposal in support of a resolution to eliminate a transcript notation for a grade of incomplete when the instructor has submitted another grade](#)
  - [Proposal in support of a resolution to discontinue posting median grades on student transcripts](#)

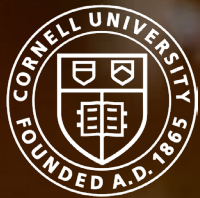
# Senate Announcements and Updates

- **Nominations and Elections committee are seeking:**
  - **Committee on the Academic Freedom and Professional Status of the Faculty – AFPSF (3)**
    - <https://theuniversityfaculty.cornell.edu/committees/standing-senate-committees/afps-current/>
  - **Committee on Academic Programs and Policies – CAPP (4)**
    - <https://theuniversityfaculty.cornell.edu/committees/standing-senate-committees/capp-current/>
  - **Educational Policy Committee – EPC (1)**
    - <https://theuniversityfaculty.cornell.edu/committees/standing-senate-committees/epc-current/>
  - **Faculty Advisory Committee on Tenure Appointments – FACTA (4)**
    - <https://theuniversityfaculty.cornell.edu/committees/standing-senate-committees/facta-current/>
  - **A.D. White Professor-at-Large Selection Committee (2)**
    - <https://theuniversityfaculty.cornell.edu/committees/standing-senate-committees/adw-current/>

# Senate Q&A

# **Course policies on recording and privacy in the classroom**

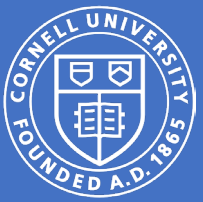
Steve Jackson, Information Science and Vice Provost for Academic Innovation



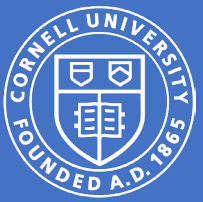
# Recording and Classroom Privacy – course-level and wider university policies

Steve Jackson, Vice-Provost for Academic Innovation  
(Information Science / STS)

Faculty Senate,  
8 November 2023



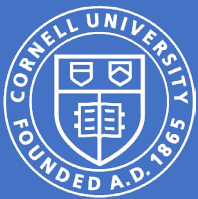
- Several faculty have reported concerns around unauthorized student recording of classroom discussions
- Concerns have been expressed around student safety (potential doxing or harassment, social media controversies, safety of international students expressing ideas critical of home country governments)
- Concerns have also been expressed around unauthorized and out-of-context sharing of faculty comments
- Additional concerns exist around third-party (esp. commercial) sharing of lecture and discussion materials as violations of faculty intellectual property



Cornell has no clear university-wide policy addressing this question (partial exception: Spring 2020 resolution, ‘An S20 Commitment to Academic Integrity, Equitable Instruction, Trust and Respect’ passed by Senate, GPSA and SA) – but this is framed primarily in the context of online instruction, has no clear enforcement process, and its status as ongoing university policy is unclear.

(See:  
[https://assembly.cornell.edu/sites/default/files/resolution\\_12 -  
\\_an\\_s20\\_commitment\\_to\\_academic\\_integrity\\_equitable\\_instruction\\_trust\\_and\\_respect.  
pdf\)](https://assembly.cornell.edu/sites/default/files/resolution_12_-_an_s20_commitment_to_academic_integrity_equitable_instruction_trust_and_respect.pdf))

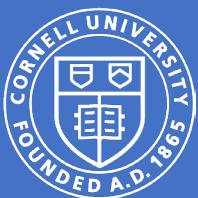




Instructors CAN set policy at the course level (through explicit syllabus statements, etc.) – but it is unclear how many do. Significant course or instructor variation may also be unclear and confusing to students.

(Note that any course- or policy-level response to this issue must also consider *pro-learning* uses of these materials, including intersections with SDS process.)



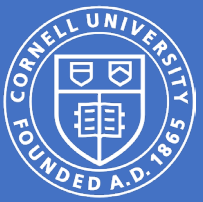


## **Rationale for action:**

The openness and privacy of classroom discussions is essential to Cornell's traditions of free inquiry and the freedom of learning (which includes the right to explore, experiment, try out ideas, debate, and change one's mind in the relative openness and safety of the classroom environment (without the undue glare of outside or future audiences).

These principles are central to Cornell's core values of free and open inquiry and expression, a community of belonging, and exploration across boundaries.

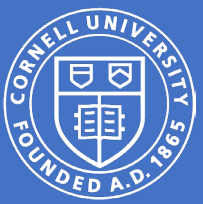
(see: <https://president.cornell.edu/initiatives/university-core-values/> )



## **Recommended action one: (immediate)**

Updated guidance to faculty on clarifying course-level policies (syllabus or in-class updates/clarifications/reminders):

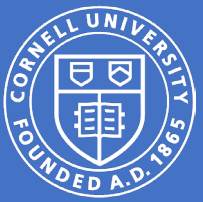
<https://teaching.cornell.edu/recording-and-classroom-privacy>



## Setting course-level policies: sample announcement or syllabus text

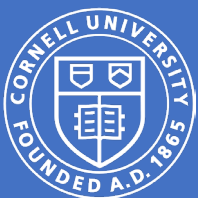
“Each person in this class is expected to respect the principles of academic freedom for instructors and classmates and will maintain the privacy of the classroom environment, as outlined in [Cornell’s S20 Commitment to Academic Integrity, Equitable Instruction, Trust, and Respect](#).

**This commitment to building respect and trust in the classroom means members of this class will not:** record, photograph, or share online any interactions that involve classmates or any member of the teaching team. Students will also respect the intellectual property rights of the instructor, and will not share or otherwise make accessible any course materials to anyone not enrolled in the course, without the instructor’s written permission.



## **Setting course level policies: community agreement approach**

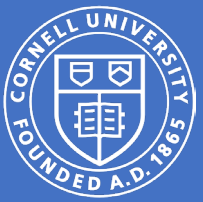
(or where circumstances allow, involve students in crafting course-level policy or community agreement on this question – what are your concerns, what are you seeing, what are our mutual obligations, and what kind of classroom environment and community do we want to have?)



## Recommended action two: (longer term)

Work with Senate, SA and GPSA to add, update or extend wider university policy.

- a) Update and generalize status of 'Resolution S20' – to be about all Cornell learning environments (not just online); to be standing policy of the university (not just short-term COVID adjustment); and to clarify process of adjudication and consequences of violation
- b) Address explicitly in Cornell Student Code of Conduct (which specifies processes of adjudication, sanction, penalty, and appeal)
- c) Add to general Cornell policy (<https://policy.cornell.edu/>)

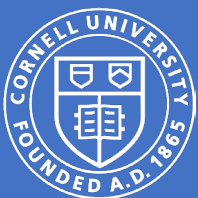


For reference, from ‘student’ section of S20 resolution:

“2. I will respect principles of academic freedom for instructors and classmates and will maintain the privacy of the virtual classroom environment: I will not record, photograph, or share online interactions that involve classmates or any member of the teaching team. I will not enable anyone who is not enrolled in the course to participate in any activity that is associated with the course. Exceptions require the instructor’s written permission.

3. I will respect the intellectual property rights of the instructor by not making course materials accessible to anyone who is not enrolled in the course without the instructor’s written permission.”

[https://assembly.cornell.edu/sites/default/files/resolution\\_12 -  
an s20 commitment to academic integrity equitable instruction trust and respect.](https://assembly.cornell.edu/sites/default/files/resolution_12_-_an_s20_commitment_to_academic_integrity_equitable_instruction_trust_and_respect)



Thank you – responses, thoughts, experiences,  
recommendations?

(discussion + later/additional thoughts to [vpai@cornell.edu](mailto:vpai@cornell.edu))

(reminder of related CTI resources on Responding to Incidents that Affect the Teaching and Learning Climate: <https://teaching.cornell.edu/spotlights/responding-incidents-affect-teaching-learning-climate>)

# **Cornell - Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit (TCAT) service agreement**

Bridgette Brady, Director of Transportation and Joel Malina, Vice President for  
University Relations



# Senate Q&A

**Introduce Proposal in Support of a Resolution  
to Eliminate a Transcript Notation for a  
Grade of Incomplete**

Lisa Nishi, Professor, Industrial and Labor Relations and  
Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education





# Resolution to discontinue posting median grades on student transcripts

Faculty Senate  
November 8, 2023



# Median Grades on Transcripts – Policy History

1997

Faculty Resolution passed to post median grades on (a) transcripts; and (b) University Registrar (OUR) website with 2 underlying goals: (1) encourage students to take courses with low median grades; and (2) curb grade inflation.

1998: Postings on OUR website began

2006: EPC Resolution to remove median grades from OUR website until they could also be posted on transcripts because inextricably linked (failed)

2008: Postings on transcripts began for students matriculating in 2008, after a decade long delay due to technological obstacles

2009: EPC resolution to remove median grades from OUR website because was having opposite effect than intended (failed)

2011

FS Resolution passed to remove posting of median grades from OUR website – this time, backed by published study (Bar, Brinda & Asaf, 2009) that showed: (1) students are enrolling in courses with high (not low) median grades; and (2) grade inflation accelerated after the new policy was implemented. Both outcomes were opposite of what the FS intended. *However, the resolution did not address postings on transcripts, which therefore continued even though median grades were no longer posted on OUR website.*

2011: Cornell Daily Sun article protesting median grades on transcripts

2011: Students began crowdsourcing median grade data from transcripts to recreate OUR postings, available on Reddit and commercial sites

2018: SA Resolution to reinstate OUR postings. If others will see median grades on transcripts, students should also be able to see before enrolling

2023: Cornell Daily Sun article echoing sentiments of 2011 article

2023: SA Resolution (current under discussion) to discontinue practice of including median grades on official transcripts

# 2011 Resolution (passed)

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## From the 2011 Faculty Resolution:

“Public publishing of the median grades for all courses on the Cornell website is used by students to select courses that give high grades...and this practice is contributing to grade inflation at Cornell, [and] the practice of posting median grades on the web is being exploited by external websites to match median grades to specific professors allowing students to choose courses or sections with higher median grades.”

## 2009 Published Study:

- Sample: courses taught pre-policy change (1990-1997) and post-policy change (1998-2004)

### *Grade Inflation*

The share of courses with a median in the A range increased by 16%

### *Impact on course selection*

The share of students enrolled in courses with high medians increased by more than 42%

Bar, T., Vrinda, K., & Asaf, Z. (2009). Grade information and grade inflation: The Cornell experiment. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 23(3): 93-108.

# Students Replicate the OUR Median Grade Postings

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Since OUR median grade postings stopped following the successful 2011 FS Resolution:

- Students have been replicating the OUR Median Grade Report by crowdsourcing their own median grades via spreadsheets on Reddit
- Students report these spreadsheets are well known
  - ▶ Just like OUR's Median Grade Report, they promote the grade-driven course selection the 2011 Faculty Senate Resolution was designed to prevent

# Reasons for recommendation to discontinue posting median grades on transcripts

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1. While the Faculty Senate sought to address the problem of strategic course selection by discontinuing the practice of posting median grades on the OUR website, the continued posting on transcripts results in the same behavior., which is antithetical to Cornell's fundamental principle of learning for the sake of learning.
2. By promoting median grades, Cornell focuses students on how they perform relative to peers, fueling unproductive stress and amplifying competition.
3. Cornell is anomalous in this practice, which may disadvantage Cornell students.
4. The research study showed that publicizing median grades promotes grade inflation and disproportionately impacts certain students.

# Reasons for Resolution

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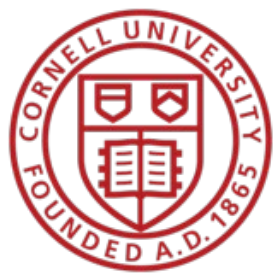
5. Students are disheartened – they report that the practice demoralizes them, devalues their academic accomplishments in the classroom, detracts from learning, reinforces student competition, and discourages academic risk taking.
6. Students report the practice results in inequities in courses with multiple sections where section instructors have different medians which are aggregated to produce one standardized median grade for all sections.
7. Commercial websites introduce another inequity by making Cornell course median grade information available for a fee, advantaging those students able to pay these fees.



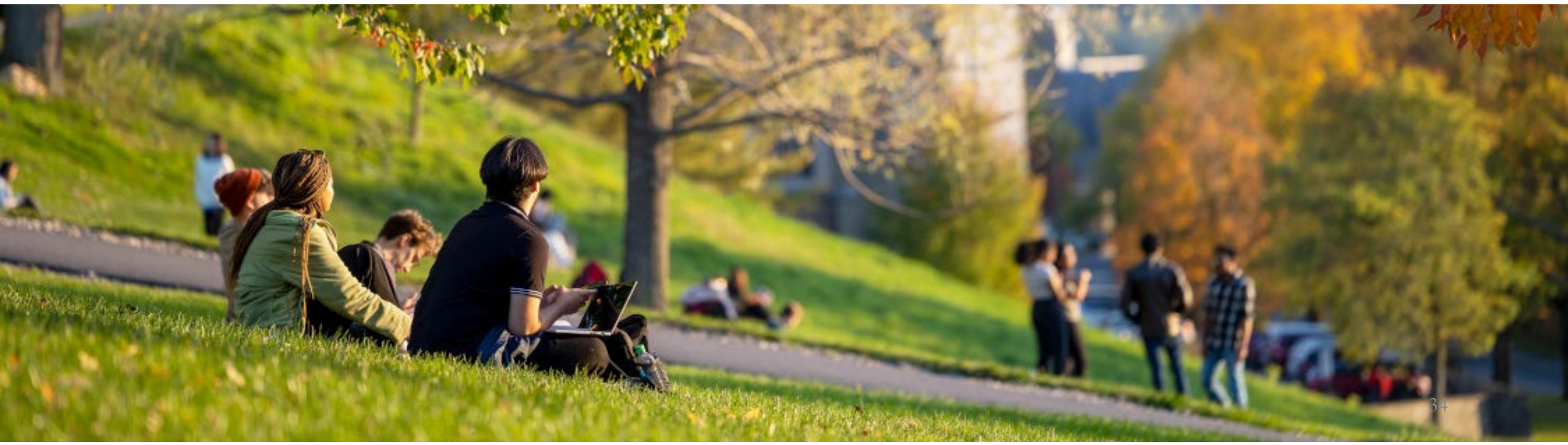
*Be it therefore resolved....*

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That the university discontinue posting median grades on transcripts.



# Discussion



# Senate Discussion





# CORNELL UNIVERSITY FACULTY SENATE



Good of the Order

Adjournment