Historical Perspective of Gender Equity and Diversity at Cornell University

Cornell University has a historical commitment to diversity, including opportunities for women, dating back to the 1860s, when co-founder Ezra Cornell stated in a letter dated February 17, 1867, “I want to have girls educated in the university as well as boys, so that they may have the same opportunity [sic] to become wise and useful to society that the boys have.” Since that time, Cornell has been in the forefront in addressing gender equity, including bringing the term “sexual harassment” into the public discourse in 1974 as part of a course on women and work.

- Since its founding, the university has had a number of “firsts” in the area of gender diversity:
- 1870: Cornell is one of the first co-educational institutions in the eastern United States.

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1 Although the term “sexual harassment” was reportedly first used in a report to the then president and chancellor of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) by Dr. Mary Rowe in 1973 to describe various forms of gender issues in the Indian sub-continent, credit for the establishment of the term is given to Lin Farley who used it in a consciousness raising session in 1974 at Cornell University. From there, Farley used the term in the 1978 book, “Sexual Shakedown: The Sexual Harassment of Women on the Job,” McGraw-Hill (New York)
- 1919: Mary Honor Donlon becomes the first woman editor-in-chief of a law review in the United States.
- 1936: Cornell is the first university to award a PhD to an African American woman, Flemmie Kittrell.
- 1972: Cornell establishes a Women’s Studies Program.
- 1994: The LGBT Resource Center is established.
- Cornell’s goal is to continue to be “best in class” in addressing gender equity/compliance and diversity issues.

**Cornell’s Approach to Gender Equity/Compliance Issues**

Cornell University is committed to addressing its compliance obligations under federal laws supporting gender equity (see Appendix B), such as Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Equal Pay Act of 1973, the EEOC Guidelines on Sexual Harrassment of 1980, and Title IX, including the Office of Civil Rights’ 2001 Revised Sexual Harassment Guidance, and the provisions of the “Dear Colleague Letters” issued April 4, 2011 and June 25, 2013. Cornell’s Title IX compliance is addressed through four departments: (1) Inclusion and Workforce Diversity, (2) Workforce Policy and Labor Relations, (3) the Judicial Administrator; and (4) Athletics and Physical Education.

The university has designated a Title IX Coordinator (associate vice president of the Department of Inclusion and Workforce Diversity) as well as deputy Title IX coordinators (director of Workforce Policy and Labor Relations, the judicial administrator, and the associate athletics director of athletics/the senior woman administrator) who are, collectively, responsible for the implementation of the university’s Title IX obligations, including monitoring university policies in relation to Title IX law developments and monitoring all aspects of the university’s Title IX compliance.4

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2 This letter was issued “to explain that the requirements of Title IX cover sexual violence and to remind schools of their responsibilities to take immediate and effective steps to respond.” (Footnote omitted.) Also, it reminds us that “Education has long been recognized as the great equalizer in America” and that “…sexual harassment of students, including sexual violence, interferes with students’ rights to receive an education free from discrimination and, in the case of sexual violence, is a crime.” Title IX also prohibits gender-based harassment “which may include acts of verbal, nonverbal, or physical harassment, intimidation, or hostility based on sex or sex stereotyping, even if those acts do not involve conduct of a sexual nature.” Id.

3 This guidance requires schools to treat pregnant students in the same way as similarly situated students.

4 Lynette Chappell-Williams, associate vice president for the Department of Inclusion and Workforce Diversity is the university’s Title IX coordinator, in addition to three Title IX deputies, who, together, are addressing Title IX requirements. The deputy coordinators are Mary Beth Grant (judicial administrator), Alan Mittman (director of Workforce Policy and Labor Relations), and Anita Brenner (associate director of Athletics and the senior woman’s administrator)
Complaints of sexual harassment and sexual assault/violence by faculty, staff and students are addressed under the university’s Policy 6.4 by either Workforce Policy and Labor Relations or the Judicial Administrator, depending on the status of the complaining party. These offices are responsible for the investigation and disposition of sexual harassment/assault/violence complaints received pursuant to Title IX. The Department of Athletics and Physical Education is responsible for compliance with NCAA and other rules related to participation in intercollegiate athletics. The offices of Inclusion and Workforce Diversity, Judicial Administrator, and Workforce Policy and Labor Relations are responsible for working with the university’s Council on Sexual Violence Prevention to make Cornell community members aware of the avenues for reporting sexual harassment and sexual assault.

The university has also established a Title IX Executive Steering Committee (vice president of Human Resources and Safety Services, vice president of Student and Academic Services, senior vice provost of Academic Affairs, and the university general counsel) that is responsible for informing senior leadership of the university’s compliance obligations under Title IX and related regulations.

Cornell regularly conducts training on the prevention of sexual harassment and sexual assault/violence for students, staff and faculty. The university has also established a complaint mechanism for addressing gender discrimination, including sexual assault and sexual harassment (Policy 6.4), which was revised this year to shift to a more administrative model for student complaints, and now eliminates the need for student complainants to describe the incident in front of a roomful of people, including the accused and his/her attorney, and to be subject to cross-examination by the attorney.

**Cornell’s Approach to Gender Diversity Issues**

Cornell’s compliance obligations under the Title IX, Title VII and related laws form the foundation for its diversity and inclusiveness initiative from a gender and LGBT perspective, including creating a climate in which members of the university community are treated with respect. Since 2000, Cornell University has addressed its commitment to diversity and inclusiveness holistically, by: 1) incorporating gender issues into its institutional diversity planning initiative, *Toward New Destinations*\(^5\) through the support of the President’s Council of Cornell Women\(^6\); 2) developing award-winning programs to address the career/life/family challenges of its faculty, staff, post docs and academic professionals\(^7\); 3) addressing gender issues for female faculty in the science, technology, engineering and math programs through the NSF-funded ADVANCE program; 4) having a robust series of gender-focused lectures and educational programs through such programs as the Feminist, Gender, & Sexuality Studies Program and the Women’s Resource Center; 5) establishing a task force to address transgender issues; 6) implementing programs for students through
the Women’s Resource Center; 7) establishing a Student Assembly position that serves as a women’s liaison; and 8) implementing a flexible workplace policy to allow staff employees to address responsibilities outside of work while being effective at work.

The university has established five University Diversity Officers (associate provost of academic diversity, associate vice president of the Department of Inclusion and Workforce Diversity, associate vice provost for Faculty Development and Diversity, associate dean for Inclusion and Professional Development, and associate dean of students) with responsibility for the leadership of the university’s diversity initiatives, including those related to gender, sexual orientation, and gender identity/expression.

The university has also established a University Diversity Council (see Appendix A) that is charged with supporting the president and provosts in providing the overall vision and framework for the university’s achievement of strategic goals focused on faculty, staff, and student diversity, reflecting the aspirations of the university as expressed in its 2010-2015 strategic plan.

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5 For 2012-2013, there were two initiatives related to gender diversity, both of which are being continued for 2013-2014. Student and Academic Services committed to increasing the retention of African American male students to parity with all Cornell students, by identifying effective retention strategies and implementing successful practices. Weill Cornell’s initiative consisted of enhancing the climate of inclusion for LGBT individuals.

6 PCCW is an organization of highly accomplished Cornell alumnae who are working to enhance the involvement of women students, faculty, staff and alumnae as leaders within Cornell University and its many communities.

7 Over the past nine years, Cornell University’s work/life programs have been recognized by AARP (Cornell was the number one employer for workers over 50 for 2008 and 2009, in addition to being a top 50 employer for four additional years), Working Mother Media, Conceive Magazine, National Association of Executive Women, and more recently, by the Alfred P. Sloan Awards.
Overview of Institutional Planning Framework to Address Gender Equity/Compliance and Diversity

Because of its obligations under law and its commitment to diversity and inclusion, the university is implementing its third annual Institutional Planning Framework to Address Gender Equity and Diversity to address its obligations under Title IX. The goal is to advance educational and employment opportunities for female students, faculty and staff. The Planning Framework is also designed to address gender-related climate issues, including issues impacting the lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender community, based on Cornell’s commitment to be a “best in class” employer and educational institution. Our commitment to address gender diversity is incorporated into the university’s college and administrative unit diversity initiatives, Toward New Destinations.

For the 2012-2013 academic year, the university established initiatives to address its compliance obligations and support the university’s commitment to gender diversity. The outcome of these initiatives is provided below. For the 2013-2014 year, the university has established five gender compliance initiatives that have been approved by the executive Title IX oversight committee and two gender diversity initiatives.

Report on 2012 - 2013 Gender Equity and Diversity Initiatives

For the 2012-2013 academic year, five gender compliance initiatives and two gender diversity initiatives were established. The five compliance initiatives were completed and significant progress was made on the two diversity initiatives.

GENDER COMPLIANCE INITIATIVES

1. Infrastructure to Support Reporting of Sexual Assault/Harassment.

In 2012 – 2013, the University Title IX Coordinators had initial meetings with Gannett Counseling Services and Cornell Police to explore effective ways to address the reporting of sexual assault/violence matters. However, after a series of sexual assaults that occurred on and near the campus in the fall of 2012, Cornell University convened an Incident Management Team (IMT) and charged it with responsibility for coordinating the university’s immediate response to the sexual assault and bias activity that had occurred and for developing recommendations for long-term strategies to address sexual assault/violence. Based on the recommendation of the IMT, the university formed a campus-wide Council on Sexual Violence Prevention that is charged with: 1) studying and evaluating the campus environment related to sexual assault/violence; 2) developing additional sexual assault/violence prevention strategies, policies, procedures, and services; 3) exploring opportunities for fostering
cultural change and reducing risks of sexual violence; and 4) increasing support for members of the community affected by sexual violence.

In addition to the formation of the Council on Sexual Violence Prevention, the university established a Title IX reporting relationship with Weill Cornell. The Ithaca Title IX Coordinators now meet monthly with the Weill Cornell Title IX coordinators to review the organizational procedures for consistency with regulatory requirements.

2. Revised complaint system for addressing sexual harassment and sexual assault/violence matters.

The judicial administrator and the director of Workforce Policy and Labor Relations, working as part of the Title IX Coordinator Team, led the development, approval, and implementation of a new policy 6.4 that incorporates the relevant precedent established under the campus of the Code of Conduct, folds in policy 6.3 (Sexual Assault), and modifies the language of policy 6.4 to establish an effective and equitable system to address sexual harassment and sexual assault/violence matters for students and for all Cornell community members.

3. Increased Communication/Outreach of Sexual Harassment/Assault Prevention.

The university established a comprehensive sexual harassment/assault awareness and prevention website, SHARE.cornell.edu, to provide information to the university community on resources, support services, and procedures available to address sexual harassment/assault.

4. Expanded Sexual Assault/Harassment Prevention/Education.

The university established a goal for this year to enhance its “C is for Consent” campaign, using high profile students to stress the need to be respectful of each other, but this was delayed as the focus was on the implementation of policy 6.4. The Respect@Cornell sexual harassment/assault prevention training for faculty and staff was implemented with more than 6,000 individuals completing the training. In addition, the university launched an educational program, Cornell Responds, which included town hall meetings and posters to advise members of the Cornell community about resources and support services available to address sexual violence/bias activity.

5. Increased promotion of campus safety.

The university established a goal to increase the promotion of campus safety, expand bystander intervention, and develop a plan to institutionalize the late night shuttle program for study weeks. The Chief of Police initiated a weekly campus-wide email that highlights safety measures and includes the resources for addressing sexual assault/violence. This communication periodically includes information on the Blue Light systems and escort service for members of the Cornell community. Efforts are underway to evaluate the Blue Light Night Transportation Shuttle to determine the need for expansion.
**GENDER DIVERSITY INITIATIVES**

In addition to the five equity/compliance initiatives above, the university established two gender diversity initiatives.

1. **Improved climate for pregnant and parenting students.**

   The university committed to reviewing its approach to housing, classroom attendance, testing and other impacted activities for pregnant students and those students with child care responsibilities. For this year, the university identified office partners on the campus who should be included in this initiative, which will be developed for the 2013–2014 year in compliance with the Department of Education’s June 25, 2013 Dear Colleague Letter.

2. **Improved climate for transgender/genderqueer students, faculty and staff.**

   The university established a goal to address a number of areas (gender neutral restrooms, enhanced employee benefits, incorporation of transgender athlete policy, and educational programs) to improve the experience of LGBT faculty, staff and students, if resources were available. Progress was made in all of these areas, although they were not finalized. Three things were accomplished this year: the university implemented domestic partner benefits and added transgender health benefits in July, and the Department of Athletics and Physical Education circulated a draft Policy and Recommendations for the Inclusion of Transgender Athletes for review and comment.

### 2013 – 2014 Gender Equity Initiatives

Five compliance initiatives and one diversity initiative have been developed for this year.

1. **Implementation of policy 6.4:** With the approval of the revised policy 6.4, this year, the university will implement the policy by training all parties who will be participating in the investigation process, advising the university community of the availability of the policy, and reviewing mechanisms for reporting sexual harassment/sexual assault matters through the policy.

2. **Development of framework for addressing all aspects of Title IX (including recommendations for partners/leads for each area):** The university’s Title IX efforts began with addressing sexual assault/violence based on the emphasis on these issues in the April 2011 Dear Colleague Letter. The university will now identify all areas covered under Title IX, determine what programs and services are in place for each area, develop a gap analysis, and identify individuals who could be the leaders in addressing each aspect of Title IX.
3. **Implementation of a Title IX Communication Strategy:** The SHARE web site was put in place this year to educate the university community on resources and support services available to address sexual harassment/assault/violence. This year, a strategy will be developed, through collaborations with university partners, to educate all constituent groups on the university’s commitment to gender equity, including the procedures for addressing sexual harassment/assault/violence.

4. **Develop report of current status and recommendations to improve climate for pregnant and parenting students:** In June of 2013, the Department of Education Office of Civil Rights issued a “Dear Colleague Letter” requiring educational institutions to provide opportunities for pregnant and parenting student comparable to similarly situated students. For this year, the university will review its approach to housing, classroom attendance, testing and other impacted activities for pregnant students and those students with child care responsibilities and complete a report that will be shared with the executive Title IX committee.

5. **Coordination with Title IX Coordinators at Weill Cornell:** This summer, Weill Cornell established three Title IX coordinators to address compliance issues for staff, faculty and students. This year, the Ithaca Title IX Coordinators and the Weill Cornell Title IX Coordinators will work collectively to carry out obligations under Title IX.

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### 2013 – 2014 Gender Diversity Initiative

One initiative has been developed for this year to address gender diversity.

1. **Improve climate for transgender/genderqueer students, faculty and staff:** On February 28, 2012, Resolution 2 was adopted by the University Assembly and provided that: 1) for all building construction projects requiring restroom facilities with a projected cost over the Capital Funding/Priorities Committee threshold, there would be at least one accessible single occupant restroom; 2) current single occupant restrooms be identified as gender neutral restrooms; and 3) athletic and recreational construction with locker room facilities include a gender neutral restroom. Based on this resolution, the university will develop a plan to expand the presence of gender neutral restrooms across campus, including locker rooms, and explore gender neutral housing options. In addition, the transgender web page will be updated.

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### Conclusion

Cornell University made significant strides in advancing its gender equity/compliance and diversity plan and has established ongoing initiatives to continue to improve how it addresses gender compliance and diversity on the campus. The university has been recognized on a number of fronts in its efforts to be a “best employer” and for its award winning educational programs. As with other aspects of diversity, the university will continue its work to achieve this same status for gender equity and diversity. The
success of the implementation of this gender equity plan will be enhanced by the collaboration with the University Diversity Officers and the support of the senior leadership.

The gender equity plan was updated by Lynette Chappell-Williams, associate vice president of Inclusion and Workforce Diversity and the university Title IX coordinator, in conjunction with the Title IX deputy coordinators, Mary Beth Grant, Anita Brenner, and Alan Mittman.

**APPENDIX A**

**Ithaca Campus Title IX Coordinator Team**
- Lynette Chappell-Williams, Title IX coordinator, associate vice president for Inclusion and Workforce Diversity
- Anita Brenner, deputy Title IX coordinator, associate athletics director, and senior woman administrator
- Mary Beth Grant, deputy title IX coordinator, university judicial administrator
- Alan Mittman, deputy Title IX coordinator, director, Workforce Policy and Labor Relations

**Weill Cornell Title IX Coordinator Team**
- Dr. Joseph Murray, associate professor of clinical psychology
- Angela Charter-Lent, director, recruitment/employee training
- Dr. Rache Simmons, assistant dean of faculty diversity

**Ithaca Campus Title IX Executive Advisory Committee**
- James Mingle, general counsel
- Susan Murphy, vice president, Student and Academic Services
- Mary George Opperman, vice president, Human Resources and Safety Services
- John Siliciano, senior vice provost for Academic Affairs

**Ithaca Campus Title IX Support Team**
- Darren Jackson, program manager of Inclusion and Compliance Initiatives
- Laurel Parker, EEO Specialist
- Laurel Parker, Office of Workforce Policy & Labor Relations, EEO Consultant

**Ithaca Campus University Diversity Officers**
- Renee Alexander, associate dean of students
- Lynette Chappell-Williams, associate vice president, inclusion and workforce diversity
- Yael Levitte, associate vice provost, faculty development and diversity
- A.T. Miller, associate vice provost, academic diversity
- Sheri Notaro, associate dean, professional development and diversity
Weill Cornell Diversity Officers

- Dr. Barbara Hempstead, associate dean for faculty development and professor of medicine
- Dr. Rache Simmons, assistant dean of faculty diversity
- Dr. Carla Boutin-Foster, assistant dean of faculty diversity, associate professor of medicine, associate professor of public health

University Diversity Council

- David Skorton, president
- Kent Fuchs, provost
- Renee T. Alexander, associate dean of students
- Dr. Carla Boutin-Foster, assistant dean of faculty diversity, associate professor of medicine, associate professor of health
- Laura Brown, vice provost for undergraduate education
- Lynette Chappell-Williams, associate vice president for the Department of Inclusion and Workforce Diversity
- Marin Clarkberg, director of institutional research and planning
- Dr. Barbara Hempstead, associate dean for faculty development and professor of medicine
- Kent Lovering Hubbell, dean of students
- Barbara A. Knuth, vice provost and dean of the graduate school
- Yael Levitte, associate vice provost, faculty development and diversity
- A.T. Miller, associate vice provost, academic diversity
- Susan Murphy, vice president for student and academic services
- Sheri R. Notaro, associate dean, professional development and diversity
- Mary George Opperman, vice president for Human Resources and Safety Services
- John Siliciano, senior vice provost for academic affairs
- Dr. Rache M. Simmons, assistant dean of faculty diversity

APPENDIX B

Federal Laws That Support Gender Diversity

In 1964, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act was passed calling for, *inter alia*, non-discrimination based on gender (sex) in the workplace as it relates to all employment functions.

In 1972, Title IX was passed, requiring gender equity for males and females in every educational program that received federal funding. The law was designed to address challenges women faced, both in terms of education and employment, in university settings.
In 1980, the Guidelines on Sexual Harassment established that sexual harassment was prohibited sex discrimination under Title VII. The guidelines also provided definitions of two types of sexual harassment: (1) quid pro quo (in which employment decisions are conditioned upon the grant of sexual favors); and (2) hostile work environment (in which unwelcome sexual conduct rises to the level where it affects the workplace environment).

In April of 2011, the Department of Education Office of Civil Rights (OCR) issued its “Dear Colleague Letter” to reinforce steps to prevent discrimination based on gender and to detail the Title IX requirements for addressing sexual assault/violence on college campuses, including the designation of a Title IX coordinator and training faculty and staff (including postdocs and academic professionals.)

In June of 2013, the Department of Education Office of Civil Rights issued a “Dear Colleague Letter” requiring schools to treat pregnant students in the same way as similarly situated students.