Student Assembly

Resolution 22: Recommending Academic Flexibility During Campus Crises

Abstract: This resolution recommends a blanket academic flexibility policy for all students during campus crises, including extensions, flexibility on prelims, and excused absences. It calls for immediate implementation in response to the distress surrounding the resurfaced sexual assault case and increased media attention.

Authored by: Yasmeen Masoud ’28

Endorsed by: Alexander Walters ’28, Hayden Watkins ’28, Ellie Porter ’29, Eeshaan Chaudhuri ’27, Lydia Blum ’27, Sophia Riley Sim ‘28

Reviewed by: Executive Committee, 10/05/2026; Academic Policy Committee, 10/05/2026

Type of Action: Recommendation

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Current Status: Adopted by the Assembly, Unanimous Consent, 10/15/20

Whereas, Cornell has repeatedly experienced a litany of tragedies, including student deaths, serious gorge injuries, reports of drugging and sexual assault in November 2024, followed by multiple deaths within the University community in Fall 2025 [1,2];

Whereas, students have criticized administrative responses housed in emails that deflect to resource referrals while academic expectations continue, forcing students to compartmentalize and move on without adequate time or practical support to process grief and fear [1,2];

Whereas, Cornell already faces a campus mental health crisis, reflected in student accounts of overwhelming academic pressure, inadequate support, and increased demand for peer support, which further tragedy can exacerbate [1,2];

Whereas, renewed attention to the gang-rape allegations, the associated lawsuit, and continuing media coverage have left students distressed and struggling to feel safe or move through their daily routines [3];

Whereas, students have expressed difficulty concentrating on assignments and studying while news of the case remains a constant presence in campus conversations and media coverage [3];

Whereas, proceeding with standard classwork and routines can feel inappropriate or as if an issue is being ignored during an institutional time of crisis;

Whereas, students have reported fear of encountering media while walking to class and concerns about being recorded or photographed without their consent, making ordinary attendance an additional source of anxiety [3];

Whereas, students often cannot fully realize their academic potential when facing serious problems as an academic community, thus eroding educational environments;

Whereas, students should not have to choose between protecting their well-being and avoiding academic penalties, or disclose personal experiences of trauma to receive flexibility during a shared campus crisis;

Be it therefore resolved, that the Student Assembly recommends Cornell immediately adopt a blanket academic flexibility policy available to all students during the current crisis and future campus crises, without requiring medical documentation, proof of direct involvement, or disclosure of personal trauma, conveyed to all faculty by the Dean of Faculty as soon as possible;

Be it further resolved, that this policy provide extensions on assignment due dates without late penalties, with a default extension of at least three calendar days for work due during the designated crisis period and additional flexibility when needed;

Be it further resolved, that instructors provide flexibility on prelims and other examinations through postponement, a comparable makeup examination, or an alternative assessment, without academic penalty or additional fees;

Be it further resolved, that instructors excuse crisis-related absences without attendance or participation penalties and provide reasonable access to missed material and opportunities to complete required class activities;

Be it further resolved, that instructors enable leniency for students in any other non-aforementioned academic endeavor, especially when expectations may affect a student's grade;

Be it further resolved, that Cornell define times of crisis to include student deaths; reports or renewed disclosures of sexual violence; credible threats or acts of violence; and other events causing community-wide grief, fear, or disruption, including intrusive media attention;

Be it further resolved, that the demand for leniency in times of strife not be deferred to pre-scheduled University breaks, including Fall Break, Thanksgiving Break, Winter Break, February Break or Spring Break, given that many students have preliminary/midterm examinations, presentations, and other major graded assignments immediately following such breaks, thus undermining the relaxing, anti-burnout ethos of such breaks;

Be it further resolved, that upon passage of this resolution by the Student Assembly, it shall be conveyed, in addition to the University President, to Dean of Faculty Chris Schaeffer;

Be it finally resolved, that University leadership promptly announce when the policy applies, initially provide at least seven calendar days of coverage, and reassess whether an extension is needed. The announcement should clearly communicate the protections to all students and instructors, identify a contact for implementation concerns, and preserve longer accommodations where needed.

Respectfully Submitted,

Yasmeen Masoud
Vice President for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, *Student Assembly*
Brooks School of Public Policy Representative, *Student Assembly*

Alexander Walters
Vice President for Communications, *Student Assembly*
LGBTQIA+ Representative, *Student Assembly*

Hayden Watkins
Executive Vice President, *Student Assembly*

Ellie Porter
Chief of Staff, *Student Assembly*
Representative at-Large, *Student Assembly*

Eeshaan Chaudhuri
President of the Student Assembly

Sophia Riley Sim
Undergraduate Student

Lydia Blum
Vice President for Policy, *Student Assembly*

Works Cited

[1] Cronin, Mary Caitlin. "'A Hole in Our Community': Students Criticize University Response Following Recent Deaths on Campus." The Cornell Daily Sun, 14 Nov. 2025, www.cornellsun.com/article/2025/11/a-hole-in-our-community-students-criticize-university-response-following-recent-deaths-on-campus.

[2] News Department. "'There's a Lot of Pressure Right Now': Cornell Community Shaken by a Week of Tragedies." The Cornell Daily Sun, 13 Nov. 2024, www.cornellsun.com/article/2024/11/theres-a-lot-of-pressure-right-now-cornell-community-shaken-by-a-week-of-tragedies.

[3] Potter, Hailea. "Cornell Student Assembly Demands Change, Passes Resolutions Following Rape Allegations." The Ithaca Voice, 5 Oct. 2026, ithacavoice.org/2026/10/cornell-student-assembly-demands-change-passes-resolutions-following-rape-allegations/.