

Student Assembly

Resolution 8: Amending the Faculty Handbook to Require Syllabus Publication on the Class Roster and Encourage Common Syllabi for Multi-Section Courses

Abstract: This resolution recommends two amendments to Section 6.1 of the Faculty Handbook. The first replaces the existing encouragement that instructors attach syllabi to the Cornell Class Roster with a requirement tied to the opening of pre-enrollment. The second adds a subsection encouraging academic units to adopt a common syllabus across sections of the same course taught by different instructors.

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Endorsed by:

Type of Action: Recommendation

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Current Status: Adopted by the Assembly, 21-0-2, 09/17/2026

Whereas, Section 6.1 of the Faculty Handbook, under the heading “Building a Syllabus,” provides that instructors are encouraged, but not required, to attach their syllabi to the Cornell Class Roster, even in draft form;

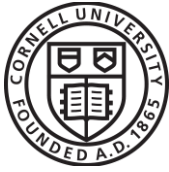
Whereas, the Class Roster confirms that a syllabus is not posted for every class, and that each undergraduate college separately establishes its own syllabus expectations in a manner determined by its dean, producing an uneven standard across the university;

Whereas, a student’s access to basic course information consequently depends on which college happens to offer the course rather than on any university-wide expectation;

Whereas, students pre-enroll in courses months before instruction begins, and frequently do so without knowledge of a course’s grading breakdown, workload, attendance policy, required materials, or assessment schedule;

Whereas, incomplete information at pre-enrollment produces avoidable add and drop activity, which burdens students, instructors, advisors, and the Office of the University Registrar alike;

Whereas, the infrastructure for compliance already exists, in that instructor upload access to the Class Roster opens in advance of each pre-enrollment period, syllabi are searchable by content,



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classes with syllabi can be filtered in the Browse pages, and students receive automatic notifications when a syllabus is attached or revised;

Whereas, the Class Roster expressly provides that posted syllabi are instructive rather than binding, and that faculty remain free to revise them as instructional needs dictate, so a publication requirement asks nothing of instructors beyond disclosure of their current plan;

Whereas, advance access to syllabi carries particular weight for students registered with Student Disability Services, students balancing employment or caregiving, varsity athletes, and students seeking religious-observance accommodations, each of whom must identify conflicts early in order to request accommodations in the timely fashion Section 6.1 already expects of them;

Whereas, advance publication of required materials also allows students to anticipate course costs and make full use of the Cornell Academic Materials Program;

Whereas, a syllabus publication mandate has proven administratively workable at scale, as every public institution of higher education in Texas has operated under one since 2009 pursuant to Texas Education Code Section 51.974;

Whereas, students enrolled in different sections of the same course, taught by different instructors in the same term, can encounter materially different learning outcomes, grading weights, and required texts while earning identical credit and an identical transcript entry;

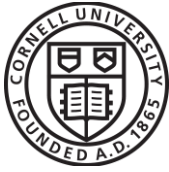
Whereas, that variation complicates advising, prerequisite enforcement, and equitable evaluation, and is felt most acutely in large introductory courses where section assignment lies outside a student's control;

Whereas, a common syllabus is compatible with academic freedom, addressing only the elements a course must share in order to be the same course and leaving pedagogy, assignment design, topic sequencing, and classroom policy to the individual instructor;

Whereas, the Student Assembly holds no amendment authority over the Faculty Handbook, and accordingly submits the following as recommendations to the Faculty Senate and the Dean of Faculty;

Be it therefore resolved, that the Student Assembly recommends that the Faculty Senate and the Dean of Faculty, through the Education Policy Committee amend the "Building a Syllabus" provision of Section 6.1 by striking the sentence beginning "Instructors are encouraged to attach their syllabi" and inserting in its place the following:

"Instructors are required to attach their syllabi to the Cornell Class Roster, in draft form if necessary, no later than the first day of the pre-enrollment period for the term in which the class is offered, and to attach an updated syllabus no later than



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the first day of instruction. A syllabus attached to the Class Roster is instructive rather than binding, and instructors may revise it as instructional needs dictate. Where an instructor of record has not yet been assigned, or where a class is added after pre-enrollment opens, the unit chairperson is responsible for ensuring that a syllabus is attached as soon as practicable and no later than the first day of instruction.”

Be it therefore resolved, that the Student Assembly recommends that the Faculty Senate and the Dean of Faculty add to Section 6.1 a new subsection, to follow “Building a Syllabus,” reading as follows:

“Syllabi for Multi-Section Courses

Where a course is offered in more than one section, or by more than one instructor of record, within the same term, the academic unit is encouraged to adopt a common syllabus covering the course description, learning outcomes, required materials, and the categories and weights used to determine the final grade. Instructors retain discretion over pedagogy, assignment design, the sequencing of topics, classroom policies, and any element the common syllabus does not address. Units adopting a common syllabus are encouraged to review it at least once every three years, and to note in each section’s posted syllabus any departure from it.”

Be it further resolved, that the Student Assembly recommends that the requirement take effect no later than the pre-enrollment period for the Fall 2027 term, affording units a full cycle to adjust;

Be it further resolved, that the Student Assembly recommends that the Office of the University Registrar issue a reminder to instructors of record and unit chairpersons at the opening of each pre-enrollment period, and report the university-wide syllabus publication rate, disaggregated by college, to the Dean of Faculty and to the Student Assembly at the close of each academic year;

Be it further resolved, that copies of this resolution be transmitted to the Dean of Faculty, the Faculty Senate, the Provost, the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, the University Registrar, and the deans of the undergraduate colleges;

Be it finally resolved, that the Student Assembly affirms that these amendments are intended to widen the information available to students at the moment of decision, and not to constrain the authority of instructors over the content or conduct of their courses.

Respectfully Submitted,



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- 96 Eeshaan Chaudhuri
97 *President of the Student Assembly*