

# From the Hill

## Pollack Orders Major Changes to Greek Life

At the end of fall semester, President Martha Pollack announced a sweeping series of reforms to Greek life. The changes come in the wake of the death of a freshman who died after attending an unauthorized fraternity party that included heavy drinking (see related story below). “Regrettably, this is not an isolated incident,” Pollack said of the Phi Kappa Psi party. “We have on this campus, as do many of our peers on their campuses, a persistent culture of misconduct in the Greek-letter system; a pattern that dates back years, if not decades, and one that I have witnessed during my two and a half years as Cornell’s president.”

The day before the unregistered party, Phi Kappa Psi members had attended a judicial hearing to answer previous charges of misconduct; after the student’s death, the chapter was placed on interim suspension pending judicial review. As Pollack noted, the Phi Kappa Psi party—and conduct violations by six other fraternities that had their recognition suspended in the preceding year and a half—occurred even after she implemented stricter Greek rules in May 2018.

With the aim of stepping up enforcement of rules intended to protect health and safety, the new measures include a requirement that chapters retain independent monitors for all events, whether on or off campus or in Greek houses, annexes, or elsewhere; for large gatherings, they must hire third-party vendors for both alcohol service and security. To ensure compliance, University staffers will do random spot-checks nightly. “Any indication of misbehavior,” Pollack said, “will result in immediate notification of appropriate law enforcement agencies with a

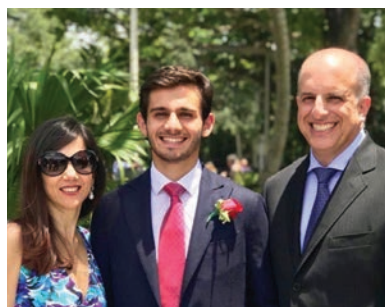
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request that noncompliant events be shut down.” If violations pose health and safety risks, the chapter will immediately be placed on interim suspension—and if the judicial system upholds the allegations, punishment will range from a three-year suspension to the permanent loss of University recognition.

The new rules also call for a complete overhaul of Greek recruitment, aimed at shifting what Pollack calls its exclusionary culture, which can lead to peer pressure to conform by taking part in risky behavior. “It is time,” she said, “to bring our Greek policies in line with Cornell’s core value of being a community of belonging.” University staff will work with Greek leaders to design a new system that will be implemented in 2020–21. Said Pollack: “[It] will include more structured opportunities to meet potential new members during and prior to recruitment, a member selection process that is less exclusionary, as well as a cultural shift that replaces parties with philanthropy and service activities as core process components.” Additionally, rules have already been implemented requiring that all recruitment and new member education activities be substance free and be held before 8 p.m.

“I recognize that these reforms will impact the character of our Greek system. That is intentional,” Pollack said. “I also recognize that this cultural shift, so desperately needed, will be difficult to realize. But this shift will help to ensure that our Greek-letter organizations continue to be places where students can form communities of friends, develop leadership skills, and contribute to our campus and local communities in healthy and positive ways.”

## Family Files Lawsuit in Freshman’s Death



The parents of eighteen-year-old Antonio Tsialas '23 (left), who was last seen at an unsanctioned fraternity party before his body was found in Fall Creek Gorge in late October, have filed a lawsuit against Cornell and other defendants. The

wrongful death suit—which seeks unspecified damages—names the University, the national Phi Kappa Psi organization and its Cornell chapter, seven undergraduate members of the fraternity, and an alumnus who serves as its adviser.

Filed in late January, the suit describes an unauthorized “dirty rush” party at the chapter house in which prospective members were hazed by being pressured to participate in a series of drinking

games that entailed ingesting so much alcohol that many participants became “blackout drunk.” “Sometime after the drinking games ended, Antonio Tsialas was allowed to leave the fraternity house intoxicated or was taken from the fraternity house while intoxicated with no efforts by any of the defendants to stop him or get him safely back to his dormitory,” the suit alleges, going on to state, “His subsequent death was the direct and proximate result of the defendants’ actions and would not have happened if the hazing event had not taken place.”

In terms of Cornell’s alleged liability, the suit’s claims include that the University failed to implement meaningful measures against hazing or to enforce its existing policies regarding fraternity parties and rush activities. “Cornell exerted significant control over Greek life on campus,” the document states, “and therefore, the University had a duty to act in a non-negligent manner with respect to stopping the misconduct of Greek-letter organizations that were subject to its control.”

# R + D

**After a study of the Danish prison system**, Human Ecology professor Christopher Wildeman reports that even a few days in solitary confinement could increase the likelihood that an inmate will die within five years of serving their sentence.



**Engineers have created** a soft robot “muscle” (left) that can regulate its temperature through sweating—work that could eventually allow high-powered robots to operate for long periods without overheating.

**More than 36 million** private-sector American workers have signed agreements prohibiting them from joining or starting a competing business for a set period after leaving their jobs, finds ILR dean Alexander Colvin, PhD '99, noting that such agreements can stifle wage growth and hinder the economy.

**Opening more grocery stores** could reduce food waste. Hotel professor Elena Belavina says that when people have to travel farther to shop, they're likelier to buy provisions in larger quantities, which can lead to more spoilage before perishables can be consumed.



**With a \$2.4 million NSF grant**, researchers at CU and elsewhere are harnessing big data to identify the seemingly disparate factors that can combine to create catastrophic events like massive power outages—an effort dubbed the Predictive Risk Investigation System for Multilayer Dynamic Interconnection Analysis.



**MILESTONE:** More than 540 new alumni received their degrees in Barton Hall in December—making the event the University's largest-ever recognition ceremony for winter graduates.



## Orchards Store Goes Out of Business

Citing financial struggles, the Cornell Orchard Store (above) has closed after nearly seven decades. Located across Route 366 from the Vet college, the store—selling Cornell-grown apples, cider, and other fruit, as well as a variety of local products like honey and maple syrup—first opened in 1952. The Cornell Store took over its management several years ago, but the shop continued to operate at a loss, and the University opted to shut it at the end of January. While some Cornellians and local residents have petitioned for it to be reopened, the University says that's not in the cards, although limited retail sales of apples are planned at harvest time.

## Engineering, Dyson Deans to Step Down this Summer

Lynn Perry Wooten (right), dean of the Dyson School, will leave Cornell at the end of June to head Simmons University. Wooten, who came to the Hill in 2017, will be the first African American president of Simmons, a private women's school in Boston. And Lance Collins (below) has announced that upon completion of his second term as Engineering dean, he'll become the inaugural vice president and executive director of Virginia Tech's new Innovation Campus.



Collins's achievements as dean include more than doubling the proportion of students from underrepresented communities (from 8 percent to 19 percent) and increasing the enrollment of undergraduate women from 33 percent to 50 percent. Successors for both departing deans have not yet been announced.

PHOTOS: ORCHARDS, HOBBS ELLIOTT; WOOTEN, SIMON WHEELER/UREL; COLLINS, LINDSAY FRANCE/UREL; ROBOT, PROVIDED; MONTICELLO/SHUTTERSTOCK; GRADS, FRANCE



**DOG DAY:** In February, clinicians at the Vet college (including fourth-year DVM student Sara Cantini) had a rare collaboration with anesthesiologists from Weill Cornell—who have expertise in cardiac cases—to save the life of a yellow Lab who had a growth in her heart. Named Lucy, the canine is a companion animal for a child with autism.

### Government's Kramnick Dies at 81



Isaac Kramnick (left), a longtime professor of government who co-authored *Cornell: A History, 1940–2015* and *The 100 Most Notable Cornellians*, has died at eighty-one. A renowned historian, political scientist, and author, Kramnick served on the faculty for forty-three years, retiring in 2015.

Kramnick's many contributions to Cornell include founding the Faculty Fellows and Faculty-in-Residence programs and helping develop the West Campus living-learning units. Raised in a foster family outside Boston, Kramnick attended Harvard, graduating *summa cum laude* and earning a PhD. He joined Cornell's government department in 1972, going on to become its chair, the associate dean of Arts & Sciences, and vice provost for undergraduate education. "The achievements of his lifetime are remarkable," his family observed in his obituary, "because he won them unassisted by the luck of fortune or birth."

### Did You Know . . .



That a classics professor recently did the first translation of a centuries-old satirical poem? Michael Fontaine translated *Pugna Porcorum (The Pig War)*—a 248-verse, alliteration-laden epic from 1530 that may have inspired George Orwell's *Animal Farm*—from Latin to English.

## HUNGER PANGS



The sudden closure of what restaurant in late January has left Ithaca without any 24/7 table-service eateries?

- a) Waffle House    c) Manos Diner
- b) State Diner    d) Denny's

[ANSWER: D]

## Give My Regards to . . . These Cornellians in the news

**Tsai Ing-wen, LLM '80** (right), elected to a second term as president of Taiwan.



**Steve Hindy '71, MAT '73**, co-founder of Brooklyn Brewery, named Cornell's Entrepreneur of the Year.

Film editor **Thelma Schoonmaker '61**

(below left), who received her eighth Oscar nomination (for *The Irishman*). She has won three times.



**Ed Marinaro '72, BS '83**, honored as number 126 on ESPN's list of the top 150 college football players of all time. On a similar list of top coaches, **Glenn "Pop" Warner 1894** ranked eleventh.

**POWER SUIT:** This 1987 kente cloth skirt suit is on display in the Human Ecology Building as part of the exhibit "Black Excellence: Fashion that Prevails." The show, curated by grad student Sian Brown, features a variety of garments such as evening gowns, custom Air Jordans, and jerseys worn by famous rap artists. It runs through late May.



**'There's just a massive amount of excitement that Cornell is the place to do all this.'**

— Engineering professor **Terry Jordan** on the research potential of a 2.5-mile-deep borehole that the University aims to dig as a test well for its proposed Earth Source Heat geothermal system

PHOTOS: DOG AND POEM: PROVIDED; KRAMNICK: JASON KOSKI/JUREL; BREAKFAST: BAIBAZ/SHUTTERSTOCK; TSAI, O./SHUTTERSTOCK; SCHOONMAKER, OVIDIU IIRUBARU/SHUTTERSTOCK; SUIT: GRACE ANDERSON