

Faculty Senate Resolution

Cornell Leadership in Honesty and Reliable Knowledge

Whereas dishonesty, falsehoods, and the distortion or suppression of reliable knowledge have become critical public issues of particular urgency;

Whereas a central mission of colleges and universities is the discovery, validation, communication, and preservation of reliable knowledge;

Whereas social media, the internet, and other forms of digital communication are dramatically changing the patterns of our communication in a manner that “blurs the distinction between fact and fiction”¹ and creates conditions where reliable knowledge is often drowned out by large volumes of false information;

Whereas Cornell University has a unique position as both a private and land-grant university with an official “...mission to discover, preserve, and disseminate knowledge; [to] produce creative work; and [to] promote a culture of broad inquiry throughout and beyond the Cornell community,” and “...through public service, to enhance the lives and livelihoods of our students, the people of New York, and others around the world”;²

Therefore be it resolved that Cornell university leadership and faculty should expand and initiate educational activities, both on- and off-campus, to explain established academic practices for discriminating between fact and opinion, validating facts, establishing what is reliable knowledge, and exposing the communication practices that distort, confuse, and seek to repress or censor reliable knowledge.

Be it further resolved that Cornell faculty and leadership should work with communication experts, journalists, and other relevant groups to develop innovative means, appropriate to the changing technology of communicating reliable knowledge with the public.

Be it further resolved that the Cornell leadership should collaborate with other colleges and universities to forward these objectives.

¹Botstein, L. (2017) American universities must take a stand. *NY Times* (Feb. 8, 2017)
<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/08/opinion/american-universities-must-take-a-stand.html>

²Cornell University (n.d.) University Mission. <https://www.cornell.edu/about/mission.cfm>