Resolution X: Requesting that the University Provide Funds for an MD Gynecologist at Cornell Health

Abstract: The student health service at Cornell’s Ithaca campus, Cornell Health, does not currently have an MD gynecologist on staff, which impedes many students from receiving necessary gynecological care. This resolution requests that the university provide funding for Cornell Health to employ an MD gynecologist who is able to diagnose and treat the most common gynecological issues in the student population, including chronic vulvovaginal conditions and pelvic pain conditions.

Sponsored by: Michelle Heeney, Life Sciences Voting Representative

Whereas, the mission of Cornell Health is “to foster lifelong learning and well-being through innovative services and strategies that promote the physical, emotional, and social health of individuals and our diverse campus community” and

Whereas, pelvic pain conditions, including endometriosis, vulvodynia, and polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), affect up to 16% of cisgender women of reproductive age1 2 3 4, as well as many transgender and nonbinary people of reproductive age, and

Whereas, untreated pelvic pain can cause short and long-term health consequences, including psychological and physical distress, anxiety, depression, poorer quality of life, anemia and infertility, as well as causing absenteeism and productivity declines5, and

Whereas, we commend Cornell Health for providing quality gynecological treatment to many students despite limited resources, while affirming that an MD gynecologist could provide services that are currently unavailable, and

Whereas, other peer institutions including Harvard and Yale have MD gynecologists available through their student health services, and

1 https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/endometriosis
2 https://www.monash.edu/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/1412644/PCOS_Evidence-Based-Guidelines_20181009.pdf
3 https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14681994.2013.842969
5 https://www.fertstert.org/article/S0015-0282(19)32292-7/fulltext
Whereas, Cornell students do not have access to convenient and accessible off-campus gynecological care because the majority of MD gynecologists in the Ithaca area specialize in childbirth services, which does not cover the full scope of gynecological care that Cornell students need; this forces many students to travel to Rochester or New Haven to receive quality care for common conditions, and

Whereas, on December 2, 2021, 136 students published an editorial in the Cornell Daily Sun to “urge Cornell to provide funding for Cornell Health to hire an MD gynecologist. Specifically, we need a gynecologist with experience diagnosing and treating chronic vulvovaginal and pelvic pain conditions such as vulvodynia, endometriosis, PCOS, and pelvic floor dysfunction”\(^6\), and

Whereas, on June 24th, 2022 following the U.S. Supreme Court decision overturning Roe v. Wade, Dean Augustine M.K. Choi sent an email to the entire Cornell community stating that “Cornell clinicians, across all our campuses, will continue to provide quality health care services to women, as is legal in the state of New York, and will continue to serve the health care needs of all our patients, faculty, staff and students,” despite the fact that students needing gynecological care do not have access to an MD gynecologist on Ithaca’s campus, and

Whereas, considering that historically marginalized groups, including racial and ethnic minority groups and LGBTQ+ persons, often have disproportionately low access to comprehensive gynecological care, Cornell Health could reduce access disparities in the student population by providing inclusive care from an MD gynecologist\(^7\)\(^8\)\(^9\)\(^10\), and

Whereas, we believe that providing quality gynecological care to students on the Ithaca campus is an urgent issue, and such care could greatly improve the wellbeing of many students.

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\(^6\) https://cornellsun.com/2021/12/02/letter-to-the-editor-cornell-health-needs-a-gynecologist/

\(^7\) https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26595584/

\(^8\) https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/12712135

\(^9\) https://www.acog.org/clinical/clinical-guidance/committee-opinion/articles/2012/05/health-care-for-lesbians-and-bisexual-women

Be it therefore resolved, that the University secure funding and develop a projected timeline for hiring an MD gynecologist who can treat the most common gynecological issues faced by the Cornell student population, and

Be it further resolved, that the University provide regular updates on the hiring process to the GPSA and SA, and

Be it finally resolved, that the University adequately communicate all gynecological services, including those provided by the MD gynecologist, that are available at Cornell Health to the student body.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Qgrads (LGBTQ+ Graduate Student Association)
Gender Justice Advocacy Coalition, Cornell University
Biodiversify Affiliates at Cornell
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