

Immediate measures to strengthen campus safety and better support survivors

October 13, 2026

Dear Cornell community,

I am deeply sorry for the harm Jane Doe suffered in 2024, and appalled that this act of sexual violence occurred within our Cornell community. It is clear that women on our campus continue to question whether they are safe. We must meet this moment by acknowledging where we have fallen short and taking meaningful action.

I have spent the past weeks listening to students, faculty, staff, parents, alumni, and trustees, who have shared their feelings of deep connection and sympathy with Jane Doe, anger and frustration that this could happen at Cornell, and outrage at the broader prevalence of sexual violence against women in our society.

These conversations, and campus protests, have underscored my deep conviction that we must do better: that the time for meaningful and lasting change at Cornell, and at campuses across the country, is now. The [independent review](#) led by former U.S. Deputy Attorney General Sally Yates will look at all related Cornell policies and practices, and provide actionable ways that we can improve. However, it is clear that we cannot wait for these findings to take action.

After gathering input from across all parts of our university community, I am implementing, effective immediately, the following measures to strengthen campus safety, better support survivors, and begin addressing the social context of sexual violence at Cornell:

1. Strengthen Campus Safety. All parties and social events in Interfraternity Council (IFC) houses at Cornell will be suspended for the remainder of the 2026-2027 academic year. These measures will provide time for a thorough review of fraternity life at Cornell to determine whether and how it can safely continue.

- There will be zero tolerance for violations of this directive. Any fraternity holding an in-house party or social event will receive an immediate emergency suspension.
- We will immediately engage students and faculty experts in the development of safe social alternatives and invest university resources in their establishment.

2. Better Support for Survivors. We will strengthen our systems of support for survivors of sexual assault in three important ways:

- We will add staff to the Cornell Office of Civil Rights, including the appointment of a dedicated Case Manager who will help individuals who report sexual misconduct navigate other university processes (such as financial aid, academic accommodations, housing, and bursar) as needed.

- We are working with the New York State Police to allow their experienced, trauma-informed criminal investigators, who are independent of Cornell University, to investigate allegations of sexual assault on campus. These individuals will interview survivors who elect to pursue criminal charges and will prepare comprehensive investigative summaries for the appropriate law enforcement agency. This would be in place for the duration of the independent review.
- Student support staff will be added beyond the [Presidential Task Force recommendations](#) to provide additional Victim Advocate support in the [Sexual Harassment & Assault—Response & Education \(SHARE\)](#) office and prevention-focused programs across campus. This is in addition to an existing plan for investment in additional mental health resources.

3. Changing the Social Culture at Cornell. Research has shown that campus sexual assault is not limited to the fraternity system. At its core is the specific context of social behavior and a deeply disturbing prevalence of alcohol and drug abuse. While this is not a problem unique to Cornell, we are committed to setting a higher standard for education, oversight, and enforcement of safe social behavior and citizenship.

- We will accelerate the implementation of the [recommendations of the Presidential Task Force on Sexual Assault](#) and expand the scope and nature of the recommendations by engaging the campus community.
- Leaning on faculty expertise in the area of sexual assault and rape culture, and actively engaging and listening to the Cornell community, we will re-form and re-focus the Presidential Task Force on Sexual Assault on expanded opportunities for safe and healthy social engagement and further ways to reduce risks.
- We will enhance existing education and programming to address the bystander effect and the duty of care we owe each other.
- To provide further support and momentum for this effort, we will engage national sexual violence prevention expertise and community safety organizations to examine the factors leading to campus sexual violence and strategies to promote responsible sexual citizenship.

We will put the knowledge gained from this initiative into practice, and invest the resources required to sustain real change into the future.

These are first steps toward systemic change on our campus. We will take all necessary steps to address the conditions that led to Jane Doe's experiences, and those of other survivors. Cornell must be a place where safety is not an open question. I am committed to doing that work, and to seeing it through. It will take all of us working together, however, to build a Cornell culture of community, trust, and respect.

Sincerely,

Michael I. Kotlikoff