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President Michael Kotlikoff  
Office of the President  
300 Day Hall  
Cornell University  
Ithaca, New York 14853

Dear President Kotlikoff,

For 29 years, the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA) has advocated for academic excellence, academic freedom, and fiscal accountability in higher education. Regarding the recent disruption of a career fair on Cornell University’s campus, we write to applaud you for acting swiftly to enforce Cornell’s policies, and we encourage you to stay the course despite mounting pressure to back down amid bad faith characterizations of Cornell’s response.

The actions of the protesters clearly violated the rights of their fellow Cornellians and undermined the operations of your institution. As observed by Vice President for University Relations Joel Malina, during the disruption, “Cornell Police officers were pushed and shoved. Guests of the university felt threatened. And students were denied their ability to experience the Career Fair.” We agree with your statement that “These intimidating tactics have no place in a university,” and we believe it is essential that you enforce Cornell’s policies against “speech and actions that infringe on others’ rights or involve violence or damage to university property.”

Recognizing the likelihood that protesters would again disrupt campuses this fall, ACTA recently published a guide, entitled *[An Equal Space for All](#)*, in which we called on universities to develop and publish viewpoint-neutral rules designed to protect their operations while also respecting freedom of expression. We were pleased to see that Cornell clarified its time, place, and manner restrictions and adopted a policy of institutional neutrality, two steps that ACTA recommends.

We now support you in your effort to take a third, critical step: honoring the promise you made to the campus community earlier this semester to enforce these policies, thereby protecting the rights of other Cornellians and preserving the integrity of your university. The protesters’ actions clearly violated Cornell’s Student Code of Conduct, which prohibits “Intentionally obstructing or restraining the lawful participation of another person in an authorized activity or event, such as . . . recruiting activities.” We agree it is entirely appropriate that those who “disrupted the career fair

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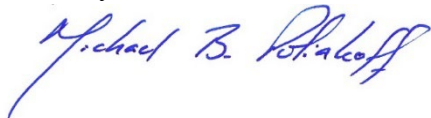
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face immediate suspension or employment sanctions up to and including dismissal.”

We understand that significant pressure is building within your institution and from without to refrain from following through with the disciplinary process Cornell has initiated. But the irresponsible leniency shown to disruptive protests and encampments by university administrations last spring has predictably proven to be an ineffective strategy. Protesters continue to disrupt campuses across the country. A building on your own campus was already vandalized earlier this semester. It is high time to teach those who disrupt our institutions of higher learning that “actions have consequences,” as you said in your statement. This includes students who violate university policies in full knowledge that doing so could jeopardize their visa status.

If ACTA can be of assistance in any way, please contact me or Dr. Steven McGuire, ACTA’s Paul & Karen Levy Fellow in Campus Freedom. Thank you for your commitment to maintaining the rules and procedures that enable the Cornell community to benefit from its resources and opportunities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael B. Poliakoff". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'M'.

Michael B. Poliakoff, Ph.D.  
President