

November 22, 2024

John Siliciano, Provost
300 Day Hall
Cornell University
Ithaca, NY 14853

Eve De Rosa, Dean of Faculty
315 Day Hall
Cornell University
Ithaca, NY 14853

Dear Dean De Rosa and Provost Siliciano,

I am delighted to write in support of the formation of the School of the Environment and Sustainable Development in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS). This School will execute upon CALS' Roadmap to 2050 strategic vision by fostering new synergies among our vast network of research, teaching and extension activities in this urgent time, "the solutions century."

This new School will be formed by fusing together two world-leading departments – Natural Resources and the Environment and Global Development – empowering our faculty, staff and students to address some of the most complex issues of our time. While the world is grappling with climate change, food insecurity, declines in biodiversity and global environmental degradation, Cornell CALS continues to pioneer practical solutions that bridge the agricultural, environmental, social and life sciences, fulfilling our mission of "making the world a better place than we found it." By creating a new cutting-edge School dedicated to disciplinary convergence, our students will have access to two undergraduate degrees, five undergraduate minors, four master's programs and two Ph.D. programs, equipping them for pivotal roles in innovation, discovery and change management during a time of unrivaled planetary-scale transformation. The School will also provide the broader CALS community and Cornell experts with new opportunities to work across disciplines and generate revenue to support the College's research, teaching and extension programs. It will be collaborative and forward-looking by design and invite university-wide collaborations through our unique position as the only Ivy League Land Grant institution in the world. The School will provide an academic home base of TT and RTE faculty to support many cross-cutting centers and initiatives on campus, including the Cornell Atkinson Center for Sustainability and the 2030 Project.

Cornell CALS is building from a position of strength in solving environmental and sustainability challenges with rigorous science, but we must embrace ambitious, bold thinking paired with innovative and entrepreneurial approaches to grow our worldwide distinction. The School will

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The Ronald P. Lynch Dean

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strategically strengthen CALS' leadership, helping us attract top-tier faculty, staff and students. Faculty hiring will be a special focus of the School as the College has committed to adding 10-15 additional faculty lines in addition to filling positions that open up following faculty retirements.

The formation of this School has involved a transparent and collaborative process with faculty and staff. This included a full day strategic brainstorming and community building session, and meetings with each Department, both individually and collectively. This past October, current faculty (tenure track and RTE) and staff in both Departments shared their overall feelings on the new School through a vote, with the strong majority (93%) being either supportive (63%) or neutral (30%). Faculty and staff in both Departments also expressed strong support for the School to launch through an interim structure that temporarily retains the two legacy Departments as "Sections" within the School. The interim structure will facilitate the establishment of the School while allowing faculty and staff additional time to design an ideal long-term framework and engage thoughtfully and inclusively in the strategic planning process. During this period, an Interim Director will be appointed through a process similar to that used for selecting a CALS Department Chair. A comprehensive search for the permanent Director, open to both internal and external candidates, will be conducted with the support of a search firm following this period.

The new School is uniquely positioned as the only one of its kind within a College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, creating vital connections that support environmental and human well-being. It stands out for its integrative focus on social-ecological systems and their dynamics, providing a comprehensive, transdisciplinary framework aimed at solutions and evidence-based action. This approach addresses the pressing challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss and global conflict in an interconnected world. The School will be the only school of its kind that connects faculty excellence to extension programing, including in New York State and across the world, with active collaborations underway throughout more than 61 countries.

I am excited to support the development of this new School and envision that its formation will be one of the greatest legacies in both CALS' and Cornell's rich histories.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'BZ' with a stylized flourish extending from the 'Z'.

Benjamin Z. Houlton, Ph.D.
The Ronald P. Lynch Dean



November 22, 2024

Dear Dean DeRosa & Provost Siliciano,

We write to convey our strong support for the development of the School of the Environment and Sustainable Development – a school that will initially be composed of the departments we chair.

We see the formation of the school as an exciting and timely response to interconnected global challenges, from climate-induced migration to the loss of biodiversity, efforts to speed the energy transition, growing wealth inequality, and food insecurity. The school will be a hub for engaged, transdisciplinary, mission-oriented research that shapes policy, practice, benchmarks, metrics, and the way we understand our world. By assembling a critical mass of faculty and related programs, centers, and institutes, the school will enhance our visibility and reputation, allowing us to continue attracting the best faculty and students in the world.

The process of envisioning the school and its future has been a collective one. Our faculty and staff have been broadly consulted and all perspectives have been acknowledged and engaged. As the School became an exciting reality, graduate students have been brought more fully into the process. Moving forward, faculty, staff, and graduate students will continue to be invited to engage throughout the proposed implementation phase of the school's formation. News of the school has been greeted with enthusiasm within our departments, but also in CALS and beyond the college and Cornell.

We are excited to imagine the possibilities of school and feel privileged to work together to help bring it into being.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lori Leonard".

Lori Leonard
Professor and Chair, Department of Global Development

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Richard Stedman".

Richard Stedman
Professor and Chair, Department of Natural Resources and the Environment



Cornell **CALS**
College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

SCHOOL OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND THE ENVIRONMENT + DEPARTMENT OF GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT

Leveraging research, teaching and extension to address many of the world's biggest challenges and creating a dynamic ecosystem for discovery and innovation that contributes to resilient, sustainable and equitable futures in New York State and around the world.

November 17, 2024

Overview

The **School of the Environment and Sustainable Development** will be founded on the merger of two leading departments in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALs): the Department of Natural Resources and the Environment (DNRE) and the Department of Global Development (GDEV). The School will leverage research, teaching and extension to address many of the world's great sustainability challenges—climate change, poverty, food and energy security, population and human migration, environmental degradation, biodiversity loss and more. The School will create a dynamic ecosystem for discovery and innovation that contributes to resilient, sustainable and equitable futures in New York State and around the world.

The School's faculty will service two undergraduate degrees, five undergraduate minors, four master's degree programs, and two Ph.D. degrees that prepare students for critical innovation, discovery and change-management roles in a century of great transitions. Faculty are free to continue to teach and advise for majors and graduate fields outside their primary responsibilities in the School. The Dean of CALs, Benjamin Z. Houlton, who was recently reappointed for another five years, has committed between 10-15 additional faculty lines to the School, in addition to retirement backfills.

The School will produce rigorous scholarship that defines and engages action agendas in six interrelated areas of signature strength: 1) sustainable ecology and resource management; 2) food systems science; 3) renewable energy transitions; 4) global population/migration dynamics; 5) risk, disaster, and resilience in the context of climate change; and 6) public health and community vitality. The faculty of the School will engage in New York state and around the globe, in local communities as well as with global and transnational institutions, Native American tribes and global Indigenous communities, industry, foundations, NGOs and policy-making bodies.

The School will be unique among peer institutions and similar schools such as Duke, Yale, Stanford, Michigan, and UC Santa Barbara, as it brings together world-leading expertise in the social and ecological dimensions of both "natural resources" and "global development." Faculty from DNRE are experts in understanding how planetary resources can improve environmental sustainability, promote the well-being of communities and ensure access to sustainable energy and environmental resources. Through the process of benchmarking, the concept of "development" was identified as another critical piece to what sets our school apart from other schools. The School will share the definition of just and equitable

development based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and adopted in the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals, which were agreed to by 171 countries. For specifics, see [UN Sustainable Development Agenda](#). Ours is the only School of this kind situated within a College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, thereby linking the agricultural, life, environmental and social sciences that underpin environmental and human well-being. The School distinguishes itself in its cross-cutting focus on social-ecological systems and their dynamics, offering a broad transdisciplinary, solutions-focused framework for human-environmental systems and evidence-based action in an era of climate change, biodiversity declines and global conflict.

In October 2024, the faculty (tenure track & RTE) and administrative staff in both departments affirmed via online vote that the strong majority (93%) are either supportive (63%) or feel neutral (30%) about the formation of a School founded on these two departments. Neutral voters were generally in agreement with the broader importance of the School, but pointed out potential issues and opportunities, which will be addressed in future decisions (creating silos, ensuring equity and respect across approaches and roles). The 7% who were opposed to forming the school constituted four individuals representing no particular pattern of unit, rank, or role.

The faculty and staff also reported strong agreement that the School should launch under an interim structure that, for a limited time, maintains the two legacy departments as “sections” within the School (agreed: 78%; neutral: 13%; opposed; 9%). The interim structure will efficiently form the school while providing faculty and staff with more time to develop an optimal structure and allow thoughtful, inclusive engagement with the strategic planning process. An interim director will be identified for this period, following a similar process as the one in place for choosing a CALS department chair. A search for the ultimate Director will take place with the assistance of a search firm and will be open to both external and internal candidates.

The proposed name, **School of the Environment and Sustainable Development**, was generated jointly by the faculty of the School through a process over many months and several discussions. The name emerged through a collaborative process that generated 17 possible names. The name was clearly the winner; it was the most commonly chosen as one of the top three preferred names and it enjoyed high acceptability by most faculty and staff. No other name came close to generating as much excitement and no concerns have been lodged since the name was announced as the winner.

Joint Appointments and Affiliations

As evidenced by the launch of similar units throughout the University, fostering strong relationships between a School and other entities or individuals on campus is a standard and welcomed practice at Cornell. A task force made up of faculty, staff, and students - both within the school and external to it - will focus specifically on creating a welcoming mechanism for units and individuals across Cornell to join in the collaborative mission of the School if they wish to do so. We expect strong ties to develop with many centers, schools, colleges, programs, and labs across Cornell.

Undergraduate Majors

- Global Development
- Environment & Sustainability (leadership & administration shared with A&S)

Undergraduate Minors

- Environment and Sustainability
- Global Development
- Leadership
- Community Food Systems
- Education

Graduate Fields

PhD Degrees

- Development Studies
- Natural Resources & the Environment

MS Degree

- Natural Resources

MPS Degrees

- Global Development
- Natural Resources and the Environment
- Agriculture and Life Science

Personnel

- Tenure-track (TT) faculty: 35 (will grow to 45-50)
- Research, Teaching, Extension (RTE) Faculty: 41
- Joint appointments: 11
- Adjunct/Courtesy Faculty: 20
- Core Funded Administrative Staff: 16
- Program Staff (externally funded): > 25

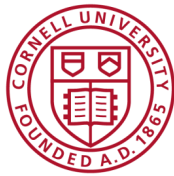
Programs

Active Programs and Centers Led by Faculty in the School

1. Adirondack Fisheries Program
2. Center for Conservation Social Sciences
3. Community Learning and Service Partnership
4. Conservation Planning in the Hudson Watershed
5. Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Unit
6. Cornell Biological Field Station
7. Cornell Maple Program
8. Cornell Farmworker Program
9. Cornell Prison Education Program (with VPELGA)
10. Ecoagriculture Working Group
11. Food Systems & Global Change
12. Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program
13. LeadNY
14. Lund Fellows Program for Regenerative Agriculture
15. NY Hemlock Initiative
16. NY Invasive Species Research Institute
17. NY Master Forest Owner Program/Forest Connect
18. NY Master Naturalist Program
19. NY Youth Institute
20. Polson Institute for Global Development
21. Tata-Cornell Institute for Agriculture and Nutrition
22. Wildlife Damage Program

Combined Expenditures and Gifts

- > \$30M annual average



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