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November 15, 2022

Martha E. Pollack, Ph.D.
President
Cornell University
Office of the President
300 Day Hall
Ithaca, NY 14853

Dear President Pollack:

The American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA) is watching with great alarm the events unfolding at Cornell University in the aftermath of the disruption of Ann Coulter's speaking engagement on campus.

As you are aware, Cornell's chapter of the Network of Enlightened Women invited conservative media pundit Ann Coulter to speak to her alma mater on November 9, 2022. Ms. Coulter was only able to speak for a total of seven minutes before being escorted out of the room by security due to a barrage of disruptions and outbursts from students in the audience. According to the *Cornell Review*, the protesters "seemed to be employing a chain tactic, beginning just as soon as the last heckler was removed, so as to continuously speak over Coulter."

This behavior must be met with appropriate and severe punishment of those responsible. The Prohibited Conduct section of the Cornell Student Code of Conduct clearly outlines that the students involved were in violation of Section IV, sub-bullets E. (Disorderly Conduct), F. (Disruption of University Activities), and J. (Harassment). We urge you to punish the students according to your own policies and make clear that you support and are willing to protect free expression throughout the campus community.

Cornell University *must* do a better job of establishing and enforcing consequences that deter disruption of sponsored speakers, as well as protecting the rights of invited speakers and listeners to engage with controversial ideas. As president, you and the university's leadership now have the opportunity before the nation to model respect for a broad range of viewpoints and develop policies that will safeguard and promote a culture of free expression on campus. Enclosed is a copy of the ACTA Gold Standard for Freedom of Expression that we shared with you last month: It highlights the important pillars of free speech and open inquiry.

PROMOTING ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND EXCELLENCE

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Martha E. Pollack, Ph.D.

November 15, 2022

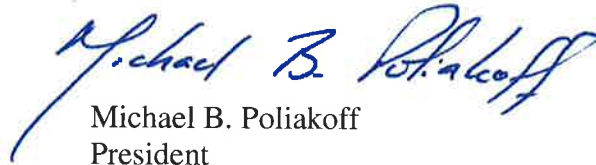
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In particular, we want to draw your attention to our recommendation to include robust free expression programming in new-student orientation, something about which we and the Cornell Free Speech Alliance wrote to you this past summer.

These are challenging times in American higher education, and what you do as president of one of America's most distinguished universities will make a significant difference. The freedom of invited speakers to express their beliefs, no matter how controversial and without fear of reprisal, is a sacred principle that you can publicly and forcefully vindicate.

ACTA stands ready to offer advice on ways to build an enduring culture of free expression on campus. For more information, please visit www.GoACTA.org or contact me at (202) 467-6787.

With highest regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael B. Poliakov". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left.

Michael B. Poliakov
President

Enclosure

cc: Cornell University Board of Trustees