December 4, 2017

Dear Members of the President’s Sustainable Campus Committee,

Cornell University is the top-ranking Ivy League institution in sustainability this year according to several key measures, including the Princeton Review Green Honor Roll and the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education STARS report. In the nationwide Carbon Commitment, we are the top Ivy for overall carbon reduction—a very impressive 33 percent.

So as you gather today for the Leadership Summit, please accept my warm congratulations and deep gratitude for all you have already achieved. Each of you helped to make this progress possible. I particularly want to thank the staff members who effectively connect their daily work with sustainability-related aspects of the university’s mission of education, research, and outreach.

Cornell’s leadership in demonstrating climate change solutions, and our strategy and timeline for achieving carbon neutrality (as we hope to do by 2035), are initiatives that we pursue with vigor and determination. At the same time, our sustainability efforts must advance our academic and research priorities. I strongly endorse the “quadruple bottom line”—people, planet, prosperity, and academic purpose—as a framework for evaluating projects and choices.

I also appreciate the support of the President’s Sustainable Campus Committee in strengthening the inclusiveness of our campus: part of what makes a campus truly sustainable is sustaining an environment in which individuals of all backgrounds can contribute.

This year’s summit focuses on the campus as a living laboratory—a place where sustainability solutions are developed, studied, implemented, and evaluated. By blurring the boundaries among classroom, lab, and campus, we are accelerating progress on exciting opportunities in the pursuit of a sustainable future in our buildings, food, energy, transportation, and more. The Campus Sustainability Office, Engaged Cornell, and the PSCC all work to connect faculty with staff, staff with students, and students with the community, with the twin goals of learning and campus improvement.

As you work to revise our Campus Sustainability Plan for the next five years, your vision and contributions are essential. The goals outlined in the plan should advance our land grant and research missions while demonstrating the kinds of changes that make for a more sustainable future. I know you will set the bar high!

I’m sincerely grateful to the entire PSCC community. Without your efforts—especially your willingness to work across unit and division boundaries on creative pursuits—our progress as a sustainable campus would not be possible. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Martha E. Pollack