S.A. Resolution # 23
Demanding Cornell Allows Anabel’s Grocery to Reopen for the Spring 2021 Semester

ABSTRACT: Due to the coronavirus pandemic, Cornell prohibited Anabel’s Grocery, a student-run and non-profit grocery store on campus, from operating in its facilities in Anabel Taylor Hall this fall. A wide spectrum of students experience food insecurity on Cornell’s campus; however, first generation, low-income, and BIPOC students are affected at a higher rate.\(^1\) Rates of food insecurity have worsened in the face of the pandemic.\(^2\) The University cited the existence of the Cornell Food Pantry as the reason Anabel’s Grocery is a non-essential activity during the pandemic, but the two entities serve different purposes. While the Food Pantry serves an immediate need for students in crisis on campus, Anabel’s Grocery sells fresh, affordable food at subsidized prices to Cornell undergraduate and Graduate students that wish to shop in our store, with no qualifications needed. Anabel’s closure has limited students’ options for accessing affordable groceries without a long, often risky, commute to area grocery stores. Anabel’s Grocery is prepared to operate safely in the Spring semester, resuming what has actually become an essential service to the Cornell community, particularly students with limited food budgets and modes of transportation who seek fresh, affordable food.


Whereas, the COVID-19 pandemic is exacerbating existing barriers for Cornell students to access fresh, affordable, and nutritious groceries due to increased financial pressures as well as the potential risk of COVID-19 exposure at large stores and on the public transportation required by many students to reach area grocery stores. Students of color and low-income students are disproportionately affected;

Whereas, according to the 2019 PULSE survey, food insecurity affects a significant portion of students on campus; 9.0% and 8.0% of Cornell students overall reported that they “often” or “very often” ate less than they felt they needed due to financial constraints, respectively. For Black respondents these numbers are 15.1% and 19.0% respectively, for Hispanic respondents, 14.3% and 13.9%, for Asian respondents, 9.2% and 6.3%, and for White students, 6.7% and 5.7%\(^3\);

\(^2\) https://www.feedingamerica.org/sites/default/files/2020-10/Brief_Local%20Impact_10.2020_0.pdf
Whereas, according to the 2019 PULSE survey, 14.6% and 17.9% of Cornell seniors reported that they “often” and “very often”, respectively, ate less than they felt they needed due to the lack of transportation to off-campus grocery stores. Juniors reported 16.0% and 16.2%, respectively. Sophomores reported 17.6% and 13.6%, respectively. Freshman reported 13.0% and 10.9%, respectively; 

Whereas, Anabel’s Grocery, a student-run, non-profit grocery store located on Cornell’s campus in Anabel Taylor Hall, is committed to providing fresh, nutritious, and affordable food to all Cornell students and to help students to learn empowering life skills such as how to cook healthy and affordable meals, practice socially- and environmentally-conscious shopping, and thus, help create a socially-just and ecologically-sound food system; 

Whereas, Anabel’s provides one of the only places where students can purchase locally grown, fresh, and affordable food on or near campus and meets the needs of people with special diets like those who are vegan or lactose intolerant by prioritizing plant-based options; 

Whereas, Anabel’s new cooperative and bulk purchasing strategies and a generous subsidy fund make it possible to offer a variety of fresh and nutritious products, including local and organic produce, at prices equal to or lower than Wegman’s, the local grocery store most students use; 

Whereas, in FY2020 (Fall 2019 and Spring 2020), Anabel’s saved shoppers, on average, 30% on the cost of their groceries as compared to shopping at Wegman’s; 

Whereas, Anabel’s has served over 1,400 unique students since its reopening in the Fall of 2019, gained over 600 Anabel’s members, supported and purchased from over a dozen local food producers, hosted educational events for over 200 students, and disseminated countless recipes for low-cost, quick and easy-to-make meals; 

Whereas, Anabel’s average daily revenue has increased dramatically since its launch in 2017, indicating success in meeting a demonstrated need amongst the student body. Anabel’s average daily revenue: Fall 2018 ($290.75), Fall 2019 ($779.48), and Spring 2020 ($1,071.36); 

Whereas, according to the Fall 2019 Membership Feedback Survey, 187 students reported that shopping at Anabel’s reduced five major barriers to accessing and cooking healthy food: 

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5 Anabel’s Grocery Giving Day Report, 2020
Note the highest ranked barrier prior to Anabel’s is transportation, which had the largest change after Anabel’s reopening;

Whereas, as part of its COVID-19 campus reactivation plan, Cornell has deemed Anabel’s Grocery to be a non-essential activity and has therefore prohibited Anabel’s to operate in the Fall 2020 semester and decided it should stay closed in Spring 2021 semester;

Whereas, reopening Anabel's in the Spring semester with online ordering and payment along with a touchless pick-up system that incorporates robust COVID-19 safety protocols would adhere to Cornell’s need to de-densify campus and reduce the potential risk of students’ COVID-19 exposure by allowing them to purchase food on campus rather than travelling to grocery stores off campus. If fewer students travel to off-campus stores, this could also reduce the potential risk of COVID-19 exposure for the greater Ithaca community;

Whereas, in an impact survey conducted this semester (as of December 5, 2020), 60.9% of respondents indicate they are spending more money on groceries this semester versus when Anabel’s was open; 75.5% of respondents indicate transportation is a barrier to getting food and 75.5% of respondents indicate that Anabel’s reduces this barrier; 55.5% of respondents indicate that cost os a barrier to getting food and 60.9% report that Anabel’s reduces this barrier; 73.6% of respondents indicate that time constraints are a barrier to getting food, and 58.2% report that Anabel’s reduces this barrier; 77.3% of respondents shop at Wegman’s instead, now that Anabel’s is closed, and only 5.5% use the Cornell Food Pantry;

- 1 = Not a barrier, 5 = A huge barrier

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barrier</th>
<th>Pre-Anabel's</th>
<th>Post-Anabel's</th>
<th>Difference</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know How to Cook</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>-0.30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Don't Own Cooking Equipment</td>
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<td>1.67</td>
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<td>Produce Spoils Too Quickly</td>
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<td>2.63</td>
<td>-0.59</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>-1.44</td>
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<tr>
<td>Too Expensive</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>-1.06</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Whereas, over forty undergraduate and graduate students voiced their desire for Anabel’s to reopen in the impact survey, including this testimonial: “PLEASE PLEASE OPEN I BEG YOU. It is not fair especially in a pandemic. I don’t have a car and TCAT takes soo long to go anywhere. If i go to Wegmans it would take 2-3 hours. This is not sustainable for me. Also, it is truly sad that buying more eco-friendly products or produce is more expensive. Can you reconsider for next semester? :l” and “please reopen next semester! Wegmans is always very crowded and I am worried I will contract COVID off campus.” More testimonials are available in this document;

Whereas, while Cornell offers a food pantry located at 109 McGraw Place, this is a downstream solution to food insecurity and food access. Long lines to attend a food pantry on an Ivy League campus raise questions as to why this issue exists in the first place. According to Ellen Park, one of the student managers at the Cornell Food Pantry, the majority of people served by the food pantry are not undergraduates, but instead Cornell staff and graduate students. Anabel’s provides an upstream solution to address food insecurity on campus by providing affordable, healthy, and local food.

Whereas, the products at the Cornell Food Pantry and at Anabel’s differ greatly; Anabel’s product mix is predominantly whole grains, fresh produce, legumes, plant-based milks, tofu, miso, whole grain bread, spices, herbs, nuts and seeds;

Whereas, the plant-forward, whole food product mix offered by Anabel’s has been demonstrated through evidence-based science, including the EAT-Lancet Report, to support human health and the health of the planet. Good nutritious food is fundamental to maintaining a healthy body and mind;

Whereas, Anabel’s supports the local food economy at a time where many farmers and producers face significant challenges, and, through its collective economic structure, Anabel’s gives all students the buying power to support just and equitable producers they would otherwise not have access to. Anabel’s purchases from the following farms, local producers and suppliers: Remembrance Farm, Six Circles Farm, Crooked Carrot, Dilmun Hill, Cornell Orchards, Stick and Stone Farm, Headwater Food Hub, Wide Awake Bakery, PlowBreak Farm, Finger Lakes Farm, Regional Access, Greenstar Cooperative Market, and Cortland Produce;

Whereas, all students on the Anabel’s team take the engaged-learning practicum course in Social Entrepreneurship, AEM 3385, in which they learn about inequities and racial disparities in the food system, how to run and manage a social impact-focused enterprise, and how social enterprises like Anabel’s can contribute to creating an ecologically-sound and socially-just food system. This course is part of the Dyson School’s Grand Challenges initiative;

Whereas, the Anabel’s team developed a new operations plan in the summer of 2020 in order to adhere to COVID-19 reopening guidelines. The reopening plan includes an online ordering
and payment system, with shoppers coming to Anabel Taylor Hall to pick up their bagged
groceries during predetermined time slots. “Curbside” pickup would occur outside Anabel
Taylor Hall, with shoppers alerting the Anabel’s team via text when they have arrived.
Vendors would deliver to the loading dock behind Anabel Taylor Hall during a
predetermined window of time and text the Anabel’s team when they have unloaded. If
Anabel’s is allowed to reopen, it will adhere to robust COVID-19 safety procedures
including the following: a group of five team members or fewer at a time will work
scheduled hours in the store to pre-package orders, stock product and staff the curbside pick
up window, wearing masks and gloves and remaining distanced from each other; one team
member will be designated as a sanitizer at all times, sanitizing high-touch areas in the store;
pickup will be contactless, and scheduled for one shopper to pick up at a time; vendor
deliveries will be contactless;

Whereas, Dr. Anke Wessels, the executive director of the Center for Transformative Action and
lecturer for the Anabel's Grocery practicum course in social entrepreneurship, AEM 3385,
will serve as the Unit Safety Monitor;

Whereas, the funding used to launch Anabel's Grocery in 2017 was donated from the Student
Assembly Students Helping Students endowment, which accrued funding through
contributions of tens of thousands of former Cornell students through over one decade of
Student Activity Fee (SAF) payments. The Undergraduate Student Assembly invested
$320,000 originally. Of that amount, $40,000 was for the subsidy fund and $40,000 for
operating costs. The remainder went to the Office of the University Architect to renovate
the space; Cornell Dining contributed additional funds to cover cost overruns. Additionally,
the Graduate Student Assembly approved $20,000 per year for four years of which Anabel's
has received $40,000 to date;

Whereas, Anabel’s was created with help from student funding and should be used to support
students, especially in times of great need such as these;

Whereas, the following student organizations are in support of this Resolution: Black Students
United at Cornell University, Climate Justice Cornell, Cornell Chapter of the Food Recovery
Network, Cornell Hydroponics, Cornell Computer Reuse Association, Zambia Community
Education Initiative, Cornell Thrift, Cornell Compost, Cornell Epsilon Eta, Dilmun Hill
Student Farm, Cornell First Generation and Low Income Graduate Student Organization,
Cornell Undergraduate First Generation Student Union, Cornell Latinx Association of
Prelaws, Cornell Democrats, Climate Reality Project Campus Corps Chapter at Cornell,
LGBTQ+ Graduate Student Association, Graduate Labor Organization, Cornell Vegan
Society, Haven: the LGBTQ+ Student Union, MEDLIFE Cornell, Gender Justice Advocacy
Coalition, South Asian Council, Cornell Asia Pacific Student Union, Cornell Students 4
Black Lives; and ILR Graduate Student Association
Whereas, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and a renewed national conversation about antiracism, it is more important than ever that Cornell supports every effort that provides all students access to affordable, nutritious, fresh food right on campus;

Be it therefore resolved, the undergraduate Student Assembly asks that Cornell allows Anabel’s Grocery to reopen for online ordering and curbside pick up, with sanitation and safety precautions at the same caliber as the Cornell Food Pantry and other Cornell Dining locations;

Be it therefore resolved, Anabel’s acknowledges Cornell’s successful efforts to ensure a low prevalence of COVID-19 on campus, and with this in mind, Anabel’s will work within Cornell’s protocols to operate starting the Spring 2021 semester and make all adjustments needed to comply or exceed with safety requirements adhered to by Cornell Dining, the Food Pantry, and other on-campus food service establishments;

Be it further resolved, Cornell should commit to supporting Anabel’s Grocery as an essential service and its efforts to reopen the store starting the Spring 2021 semester.

Respectfully Submitted,

Deana Gonzales ‘21  
Co-Chair, City and Local Affairs Committee of the Student Assembly

Lucas Smith ‘22  
Co-Chair, City and Local Affairs Committee of the Student Assembly

Catherine Huang ‘21  
President, Cornell Student Assembly

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SA Liaison to Anabel’s Grocery

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Anabel’s Grocery Team Member

Chelsea Lee ‘21  
Anabel’s Grocery Team Member

Ryan Stasolla ‘21  
Anabel’s Grocery Team Member
Ellen Park ‘21
Anabel’s Grocery Team Member

Emily Desmond ‘21
Anabel’s Grocery Team Member

Hanna Reichel ‘17
Board Co-Chair of Anabel’s Grocery

Matthew Stefanko ‘16
Anabel’s Grocery Co-Founder

Emma Johnston ‘16
Anabel’s Grocery Co-Founder

Reviewed by: City and Local Affairs Committee on 12/8/2020, 7-0-0)