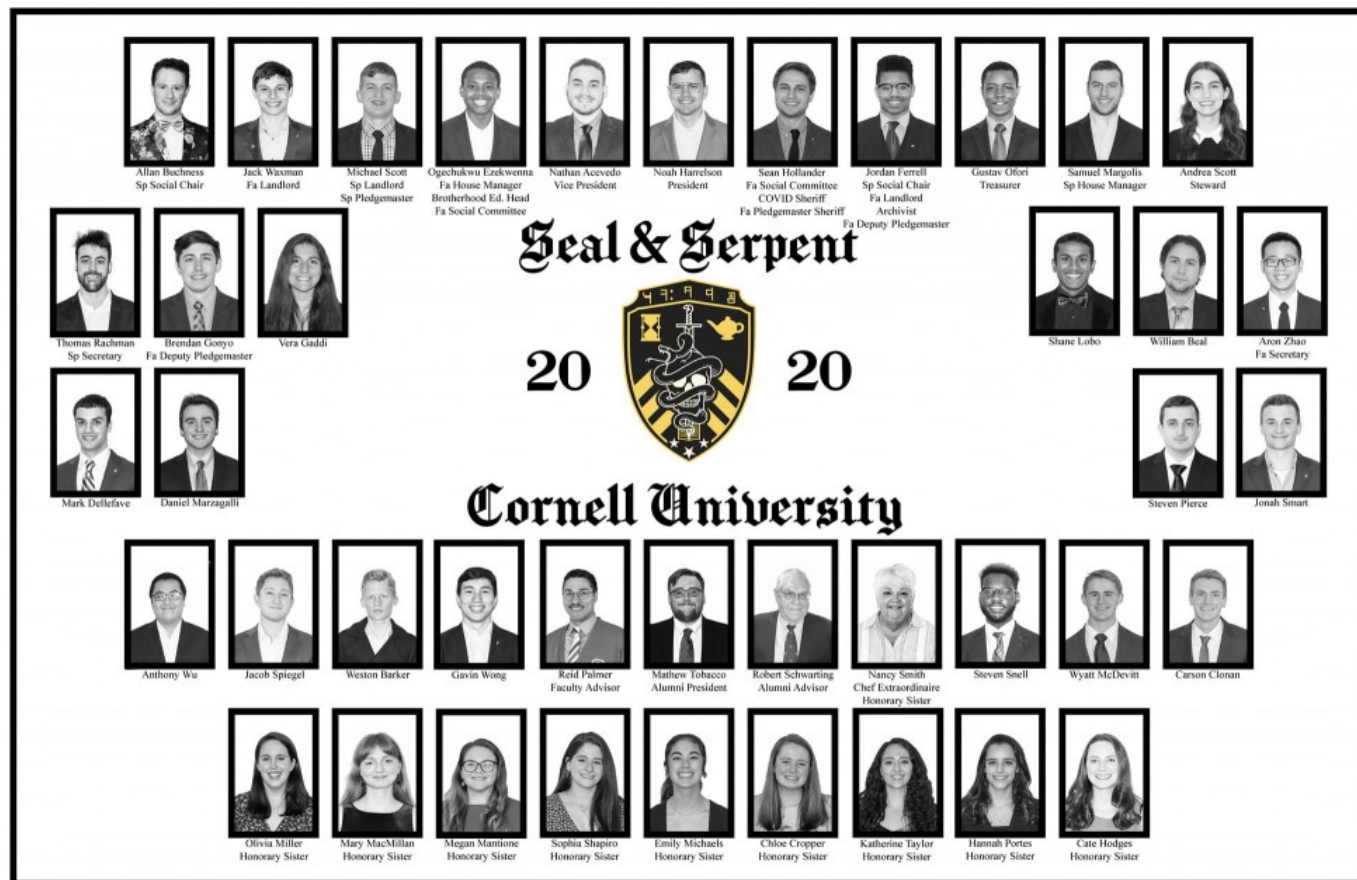


Cornell Fraternal Society Goes Gender-Neutral



New York, Ithaca, Mar 8, 2021 ([Issuewire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - At a 2020 Virtual Homecoming event in November, The [Seal & Serpent Society](#) at Cornell University voted to make their fraternity gender-inclusive, removing barriers to membership. This vote received overwhelming support.

Alumni President Mathew Tabacco said this of the vote: *"Words can motivate, but the action is the best leader. We took action for ideals we believe in; our independence and the equality of our members. Our Society is stronger for this change. I hope we set an example to other all-male organizations."*

Change has taken hold quickly. Since the vote, the Active Chapter inducted several new members, several including females, and elected a female active chapter President, Andrea Scott.

S&S left the [IFC \(Interfraternity Council\)](#) five years ago, opting out because it never truly fit the typical Greek fraternity mold. Leaving the IFC coincided with Cornell Rush policies' changes, removing the time needed to truly meet people and educate potential members on how S&S differed from typical Greek-lettered organizations. As a fraternal society, S&S is still the same social organization it has been for more than 100 years.

Founded at Cornell, Seal & Serpent remains true to Cornell's motto: "I would found an institution where any person can find instruction in any study." Seal & Serpent has always been a fraternity of individuals.

What binds them together is recognizing that each member is their own person - they believe individual variety forms a stronger collective identity.

Many women were close to the Society over the years, contributing to its success. Some were even initiated as "Little Sisters" and then honorary Sisters (when the 80s terminology became outdated). Seal & Serpent has gone beyond the initiation of new non-brother members; they have offered full membership status as Alumnae to many women closely connected to the society in the past.

Alumni Peter Chefalo noted on the Society Facebook page: *"I distinctly recall a discussion in 1987 where some of us agreed that there was no compelling argument for denying voting rights to our 'little sisters' - effectively full membership. Then we shrugged our shoulders and went to bed. I'm glad that 33 years later, that discussion has finally concluded."* Active members had similar conversations over time, especially during the past decade. But concerns about alumni reaction may have slowed change: Didn't they think of it as a men's club?

While going gender-neutral generated considerable contemplation and debate for S&S, the recent decision is now opening up new opportunities for redefining Cornell Greek/Social life and sparking considerably more alumni engagement.

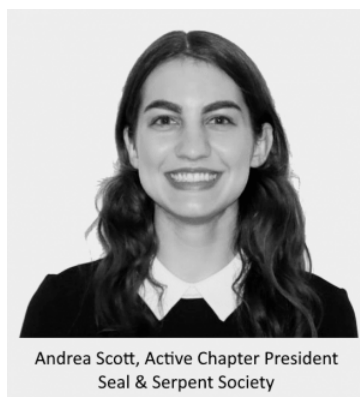
If your organization is considering a similar transformation and you want advice on the process Seal & Serpent took to embrace change, they have offered to help.

About Seal & Serpent

Founded in 1905, S&S is one of the oldest independent fraternities in the nation - perhaps the oldest. Their mission has been to create strong relationships between Cornellians for over 100 years. S&S is located at 305 Thurston Ave in Ithaca, just across the suspension bridge to the Arts Quad of Cornell University. For more information, visit: SealandSerpent.org

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Source : Seal & Serpent Society

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