

President, provost to advise NY's safe reopening strategy

By Joe Wilensky | April 30, 2020

Cornell leaders are playing a vital role in helping New York state plan for reopening safely as the COVID-19 pandemic eases.

Earlier this week, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced the formation of the **New York Forward Re-Opening Advisory Board** (<https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/amid-ongoing-covid-19-pandemic-governor-cuomo-outlines-additional-guidelines-phased-plan-re>) and named Cornell President Martha E. Pollack as one of about 100 members.

Co-chaired by two former secretaries to the governor, Steve Cohen and Bill Mulrow, the board includes dozens of business, academic, community and civic leaders from across the state and will help formulate and implement New York's phased reopening strategy.

The advisory board will "help guide this process and ensure businesses are following the necessary guidelines to preserve public health as we work towards a new normal," Cuomo said in a press release.

"I'm honored to join the advisory board in its role of providing evidence-based guidance for the complex process of reopening our state on a regional basis," Pollack said. "Cornell is already **well into planning our own recommendations**" (<https://statements.cornell.edu/2020/20200422-Y7Akb-planning-update.cfm>) for reactivating our campuses, and I hope to share our experiences and perspectives with the board."

Orinthia T. Montague, president of Tompkins Cortland Community College, also is a member of the New York advisory board.

Additionally, earlier this month Cornell Provost Michael I. Kotlikoff helped form the Restart Plan for Higher Education, a 20-member task force he is co-chairing with Adelphi University President Christine Riordan, to formulate broad guidelines for restarting higher education in New York state.

"As we look forward to reopening our campuses, universities and colleges across New York need thoughtful guidelines and effective coordination with state and local health officials to ensure safe operations," Kotlikoff said, "plans that state policymakers are comfortable with, and, just as importantly, ones in which faculty, staff and students can have confidence. We are looking at strategies and procedures to meet the unique demands associated with residential college campuses."

The task force, which was created within the **Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities in New York** (<https://cicu.org/>) (CICU), includes CICU members as well as the State University of New York, and will advise New York state policymakers on mitigating risk and crafting safe reopening scenarios for colleges and universities of different sizes and in different regions statewide.

"The stakes for reopening higher education couldn't be higher," the Restart Plan for Higher Education's general guidelines state. "If we cannot safely welcome students from across the country and the world to our campuses this fall, the economic consequences for New York's colleges and universities, as well as the many communities in which they are located, will be dire. Higher education institutions are the lifeblood of communities across the state, and our students sustain thousands of local businesses."

The task force expects to deliver recommendations and guidelines by May 15 as the state considers ways to reopen the economy.

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