

**Press Contact:** Nick Wilson, 312-802-3831  
**Interviews With Quoted Students Available**  
**Instagram:** @sdc.now



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: CORNELL UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT HITS TWO STUDENTS WITH CAR AFTER DISCUSSION ABOUT STUDENT SPEECH RIGHTS**

**ITHACA, NY** — At 8:20 PM on Thursday, Cornell University President Michael Kotlikoff rapidly backed his car into a Cornell student, injuring a second student by running over his foot. Kotlikoff proceeded to drive away without comment. The students approached Kotlikoff after an on-campus debate regarding Palestine hosted by the Cornell Political Union.

**Video clips of the incident are attached to this release** along with a video of Students for a Democratic Cornell (SDC) President Sophia Arnold speaking with Kotlikoff prior to the incident.

Cornell University has suspended over 80 students for nonviolent political protest since 2023 by unevenly enforcing its Student Code of Conduct. The students, who are members of Students for a Democratic Cornell, approached Kotlikoff to discuss issues of free expression on campus. In December 2025, 93% of Cornell student voters demanded the restoration of student control over the Code in a referendum championed by SDC. President Kotlikoff effectively vetoed the resolution, refusing to take action.

*“President Kotlikoff deliberately drove into two students trying to engage him in conversation about the repression of free speech on our campus. This reckless act demonstrates the lack of accountability Cornell’s administration has shown to its students as a whole,”* said **Aiden Vallecillo, an SDC member and Cornell senior whose foot was run over by Kotlikoff’s car.**

*“Tonight, Michael Kotlikoff made it clear that he would rather violently attack students than engage with us,”* said **Hudson Athas, an SDC member and junior at Cornell who was backed into by Kotlikoff,** *“This is representative of the culture that Cornell’s administration cultivates on campus, where students are afraid to speak out against University administration for fear of repression.”*

*“President Kotlikoff is directly responsible for the suspensions and arrests used to virtually eliminate student protest at Cornell,”* said **Sophia Arnold, a senior at Cornell and president of SDC who witnessed the event,** *“His willingness to put students’ physical health at risk to keep Cornell’s infringement on students’ rights from coming to light reflects shamefully on the University.”*

**ABOUT SDC:** *Students for a Democratic Cornell is an independent, student-run organization that fights for free speech on Cornell University’s campus. It fights for an end to unjust interim suspensions of nonviolent student protestors and reform to Cornell’s repressive Code of Conduct. SDC has faced harassment from administration and campus police, despite following Cornell’s stringent Expressive Activity Policy.*

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