

Mills College MFA Collective

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: MFACollectiveMills@gmail.com [February 28th 2022]

Mills College MFA Collective Demands Accountability for Misrepresentations of Mills College's Future to Students, Faculty, and Staff

Oakland, CA (unceded Ohlone Land) (February 28th 2022) — Following grievous mismanagement of Mills College's budget by Mills' administration, the college now faces cessation, and acquisition by Northeastern University (NEU). As prominent degree programs fold and students struggle to locate accurate and consistent information, students must make decisions with significant financial implications—both in terms of student loans and future employment opportunities. Without adequate information or time to weigh their choices, they face an ultimatum: either transfer to NEU, or leave.

“I came to Mills College because of its legacy in the Arts. The book-art and music programs are massively influential. And the most vibrant and inclusive writers have sat in these same workshops. But, the Mills' Arts legacy ends when the acquisition is signed,” Em Kohl, a first-year MFA Creative Writing Candidate at Mills College, said. “We first year MFAs, graduating after July 1st 2022, will have degrees that say NEU not Mills. And the NEU program models will take us more time. NEU promises to cover extra tuition/fees, but I wonder about the future students who will sit in these classrooms. NEU's costs are way beyond what I'd be willing to accrue in student loans.”

Under the merger, Mills College's five separately accredited MFA programs--creative writing, book-art, visual art, music performance and literature, electronic music & recording media--and the two accredited MA programs--dance and music composition--will be collapsed into a single degree at NEU: an MFA in Interdisciplinary Arts. For students whose careers depend on a terminal degree within their field, “Mills at NEU” is no longer an option. These plans were not revealed to graduate students until January 18, the day before spring classes began. Students who did not wish to transfer to NEU and wanted full forgiveness of their Spring 2022 Federal Loans had less than 24-hours to withdraw.

Mills' administration has a troubled history. “By 2019, public data shows, Mills was spending more on administration than it was on instruction, a phenomenon that is rare and disturbing,” Dr. Mathew D. Hendricks told The Mercury News in an [op-ed](#). “[Administrators] severely decreased instructional spending and fired faculty, while simultaneously increasing spending on

their own administration." In [May 2021](#) the faculty passed a vote of no confidence against the Mills College Provost and Dean of the Faculty, Chinyere (Julia) Oparah, President Elizabeth Hillman, and the Executive Committee of the Mills Board of Trustees. As of today, all of the aforementioned individuals retain administrative seats at Mills.

A partial, [leaked](#) copy of the agreement, dated September 14, 2021 revealed that Mills' administration was aware of the sweeping changes early last fall. Students enrolled for Fall 2021 with plans to graduate in 2023 did so under the assurance that they would be able to complete their degrees under Mills College's umbrella through the summer of 2023. On March 17, 2021, Mills administration [publicly announced](#) that the college would become a non-degree-granting, social-justice institute in 2023. Mills briefly considered negotiations with [UC Berkeley](#) before entering a pending alliance with NEU on June 17, 2021. Now, NEU will acquire Mills by June 30, 2022. On July 1, NEU will legally establish its twelfth campus: 'Mills College at Northeastern University.' Mills College, and its accreditations, will cease to exist.

Mills College majors are also folding at the undergraduate level. Under Mills at NEU, landmark Mills programs dedicated to equity, creative expression, and child welfare will be gone: [Women's - Gender and Sexuality Studies](#), Ethnic Studies, Art History, Dance, Early Child Development, and Business Administration. Students are not the only ones adversely affected. Mills College has been unwilling to recognize the Mills Faculty/Staff Union, which was organized in Spring 2020. As it stands, Mills faculty and staff do not have employment pathways secured with Mills College at Northeastern University.

Mills College is a cherished 170-year-old liberal arts college known for repeatedly creating higher education more equitable for women and queer/non-binary students in the United States. Alums of note include: [Barbara Lee](#) (U.S. Representative), [Phillipe Cunningham](#) (Minneapolis City Council Member), [Laurie Anderson](#) (electronic musician and performer), [Trisha Brown](#) (choreographer), and [Meg Day](#) (poet and educator). This acquisition means that Mills' long legacy is about to end.

The negative effects of this acquisition are already becoming visible, adding stress and uncertainty to the daily lives of Mills students and detracting from students' abilities to focus on their academics, jobs, families, and communities. Last, but not least: a tagline on the undergrad tuition page proclaims "You Can Afford Mills," and a similar note is on the graduate costs page, but this will not hold true if Mills at Northeastern adopts the same fees as the rest of the NEU campuses--nearly double that of Mills. Since Mills College actively supports underprivileged and first-generation students, a doorway to higher education may close for many.

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

[Spreadsheet of NEU Graduate Majors in Place of Mills Graduate Programs](#)

Cost Comparison of [Mills College Undergraduate](#) and [NEU Undergraduate Degrees](#)

RELEVANT ARTICLES

[“After Mills merges with Northeastern, some students’ majors will no longer exist”](#)

[“Opinion: Mills College spent more on administration than instruction”](#)

[“The Colleges that won’t die.”](#)

RELEVANT MEDIA

[Mills Staff and Faculty Union Rally | March 1st 2022](#)