

Mills College Students

Timeline of Key Announcements, Communications, and Actions

related to the closure/acquisition of the college
(as of 11/8/23)

Note: Underline added for emphasis of key phrases.

October 2020

In a town hall meeting for alumnae, hosted by college president Beth Hilman, alumnae – some of whom are also parents of current Mills students – were told that Mills was “financially sound” for at least another 5 years, but that discussions were underway with UC Berkeley regarding future partnerships. At that point, the information shared was that talks were “in the early stages” with UCB. There was no indication of financial shortfalls within the next 2-3 years that we needed to be concerned about in terms of Mills closing and/or being acquired.

March 17, 2021

Hillman sent students an email stating that Mills College would be closing, with the Class of 2023 being its last graduating class.

March 25, 2021

Students receive an email from Hillman announcing that the UC Berkeley “Changemaker in Oakland Program” will bring 200 first-year UCB students to live and study on the Mills campus.

March 31, 2021

Students are invited to participate in helping to “design” the new Mills Institute that will replace their college.

June 10, 2021

Hillman emails students her response to a Cal Alumni magazine story about the UCB Changemakers program. A portion of that statement reads: “Mills is continuing to weigh options for its future; engaging in promising conversations with several potential academic partners; considering proposals that include those made by the Save Mills College Coalition and the UCMills Campaign; listening to alumnae, faculty, staff, and students; and planning to host more Mills students – new and continuing – than UC Berkeley student on campus this fall. As you already know, we are continuing to envision a possible Mills Institute.”

June 17, 2021

Hillman sent students an email announcing that Mills College would instead be merging with Northeastern University. Students are told, “This new alliance would allow for continued conferral of degrees on the Mills campus with the Mills name as part of those degrees, enhanced support for Mills’ current students, faculty, and staff, and the future development of new educational programs.”

And the following: “Mills would become Mills College at Northeastern University. Though Mills would not be an independent, standalone institution, undergraduate degrees would be offered

through Mills College at Northeastern University. Mills would become gender inclusive at the undergraduate level.”

And this: “Current Mills students will be able to complete their degrees at Mills or at Mills College at Northeastern University, depending on a student’s degree path and timing of the alliance. Prior to finalization of the alliance, Mills students would also have the possible option to transfer to Northeastern at no additional cost, based on individual degree paths, or to transfer to other universities with which Mills has negotiated transfer agreements. More information is expected to be available this fall regarding specific pathways.”

September 14, 2021

Students receive another email from Hillman sharing that the Mills College Board of Trustees had voted to approve the “merger,” but that now the last graduating class would be Spring 2022, when Mills would then officially become part of Northeastern University, effective July 1, 2022. “Students who complete their studies before June 30, 2022 will graduate with a degree from Mills College. Students who complete their studies after June 30, 2022 will graduate with a degree from Mills College at Northeastern University.” And this: “A key next step in the transition process is for Mills and Northeastern faculty and staff to work jointly to develop the undergraduate and graduate degree programs that Northeastern will offer on the Oakland campus through Mills College at Northeastern University and otherwise. Degree programs will leverage the strengths of both Mills and Northeastern and will be relevant to both students and the employer community.”

September 22, 2021

Students receive an email from the Provost’s Office outlining a few key points, including: “Starting on or about July 1, 2022, Mills College’s continuing undergraduate and graduate students will be able to complete their degrees under Mills College at Northeastern University.” Students also are advised that the “partner schools” list is finally available for transfer opportunities.

December 6, 2021

Students are invited to join Northeastern students in the “Leading Social Change Program” that will be housed at Mills for the Spring semester. What they’re not told is that Northeastern is waiving all room & board and fees for their students. Mills students are still paying for their own. “We are excited to announce that the Leading Social Change Program is now open to both Mills and Northeastern students. This is the first academic program to be offered by the partnership between Mills College and Northeastern University, and is based on Mills’ long history and mission of social justice and equity.”

January 18, 2022

Students were presented with lists of majors and programs that are not accredited by NEU. At the same time, they announced that, contrary to what has been stated for the past 10 months, all diplomas after Spring 2022 would be from Northeastern University and all students would have to “transfer” to Northeastern. Many students were also told they would have to transfer to

new schools because neither Mills nor NEU is accredited for those programs. Until this time, no “degree pathways” or teach-out plan information had been shared with students.

May 11, 2022

Class Action Suit filed at the Superior Court for the State of California, Alameda County. The complaint is for “damages, restitution and injunctive relief.”

Case is assigned to the Hon. Brad Seligman.

November 7, 2023

Judge Seligman gave preliminary approval to a \$1.25 million settlement for “former students at Mills College in Oakland who claimed they were misled, and forced to spend more on education, when the formerly all-women’s school merged with coed Northeastern University last year.”

(see full article at: <https://www.all4mills.com/news>)

Example of the personal and education impact on a particular student:

Main issues for Art History / History Double Major “Student A”

1. Had she known before returning to Mills in August 2021, that her class would NOT get a “Mills College” degree – as promised – but rather a “Mills College at Northeastern University” degree/diploma, she would have not returned.
2. This student specifically sought out Mills because of its small size, focus on the arts and humanities, and the fact that it’s a women’s college. She returned in Fall 2021 expecting to finish her studies at Mills College – based on everything the administration was telling students – before it planned to stop issuing degrees in Spring 2023. Instead, the school is now becoming a west coast branch of a large co-ed university whose focus is research and global expansion of specialized satellite campuses... with no focus on the arts and humanities, let alone the ability or accreditation to confer degrees in any of those areas.
3. The Art History department was already small ($\frac{1}{3}$ fewer classes offered than two years ago) and there has been no explicit or written commitment to continuing specific majors like Art History, until the January 18, 2022, list was released confirming there would no longer be an Art History major offered. Instead Student A would be expected to now major in “Art” which is an entirely different degree.
4. Campus life and climate was greatly diminished with the massive loss of student enrollment (after the closure announcement in March) and student support services are also lacking (such as turnover and open positions, lack of administrative follow up, and no longer offering access to on-campus medical care).
5. The college promised support and assistance for transferring to other schools back in March, but waited until late September to even publish the list of those partner schools. Many of those partner schools are not even options for this particular student as they are either grad schools or don’t offer Art History majors either.