Hello, my name is Jeff Russ, I am a first year MD-PhD student, and I intend to run for Student Overseer. Student life at Cornell is wonderful, but it isn’t perfect. During my time here thus far, I have noticed some ways that life at Cornell could be improved and I have heard my classmates voicing similar desires for improvement. I am in an optimal position to integrate all our ideas and induce change for the benefit of the entire Weill Cornell student body.

The Student Overseer is a representative of students in both the graduate school and the medical school. As an MD-PhD student I feel I have a unique insight into the concerns of both graduate students and medical students. During the three year term that this position entails, I will be completing my second year of medical school and starting my first two years of graduate school. I will thus have equal understanding of what life is like as each type of student and, because of my eight year commitment to this school, I am especially invested in the long-term outcomes of my projects. Also, as a member of MSEC, I have already had a role in administration at Weill Cornell. Listening to the issues raised at MSEC meetings has provided me with some great project ideas, some of which are already underway.

One project that I think should be a major focus for the Student Overseer is Weill Cornell’s commitment to environmentalism. Some of my classmates and I have noticed a few obvious ways to reduce waste production around campus and were surprised that Cornell’s sustainability efforts weren’t more prominent. I’ve thus helped establish the Student Green Initiative to promote and implement projects that will reduce Weill Cornell’s environmental impact. As a member of MSEC, I helped our group become an official MSEC subcommittee. I have also garnered some initial support from GSEC as well. We also have the aid of Kristen Adams, the official faculty representative for sustainability at Cornell, and we intend to coordinate our efforts with hers. We’ve taken small steps so far, but our plans include making recycling more convenient, encouraging reuse of discarded items, and helping to reduce housing and laboratory energy usage. Now that the Student Green Initiative has been established, as Student Overseer I would like to expand it institutionally, as well as into the community. This is a great opportunity to learn from successful environmental initiatives on other campuses, like Mike Walsh’s green campaign at the Ithaca campus, as well as to share our successful ideas with other New York schools. Sustainability is something that benefits everyone at Weill Cornell, and it is time that environmental consciousness at this institution rivals that of any other school.

Another major topic I intend to address as Student Overseer is the issue of protected student space. The sparse amount of guaranteed student space at Cornell is a topic that I hear about repeatedly at MSEC meetings and from my classmates. As Student Overseer I hope to improve existing student areas as well as expand our space. I have been in touch with the new management of the Archibald Commons café who intends to turn it into a more inviting lounge and dining area. I think the café has incredible potential to be a place where students can enjoy eating, studying, and mingling, and I have offered to help with their overhaul. I would also like to increase restriction of outside parties from using student-specific areas such as the Ed Center, Olin Lounge, and the gyms so that students will not feel chased from their few promised areas. More prospectively, I have looked at the blueprints for the new research buildings that are being planned for 69th Street. They include plans for student lounges, conference rooms, computer labs, and a café. While these won’t be installed for a few years, I plan to ensure that these amenities remain exclusively for student use, so future students will not feel encroached upon.

Certainly both graduate and medical students face many more concerns than these, and I’d be happy to listen to suggestions about other aspects of Weill Cornell that require improvement. I plan to help any way I can, both now and as Student Overseer.