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Garrett thanks staff, empowers them to cut red tape



An initiative to reduce the burden of bureaucracy at Cornell is not a one-time goal, but a way of operating for a modern university that wants to be “nimble, flexible, resilient and responsive,” President Elizabeth Garrett said in her first formal address to staff Nov. 13.

Staff are key to that effort, she said, pointing to work “on things that you just know could be done better. This is about empowering staff who may well know more about these things than faculty or students.”

Garrett emphasized that all staff play a role in the streamlining effort and, more importantly, in the success of the university. “Whether we care for the campus grounds or maintain advanced research equipment, counsel students or manage payroll or process travel reimbursements, motivate donors or carry out the myriad of other ways and functions in which a research university operates, we are all engaged in the academic mission and the academic enterprise. We are all citizens of the university and we are all contributors to that success,” she said.

Hosted by the Employee Assembly, about 600 staff gathered in Kennedy Hall’s Call Auditorium to hear Garrett’s address, which also was streamed live to 585 unique viewers.

Much of the address and many staff questions afterward focused on Garrett’s August memo, which asked provosts, deans and vice presidents to assess processes and procedures and to eliminate paperwork and other administrative burdens where goals can be met more effectively. Garrett has asked the leaders of the central administration and colleges to submit to her by Dec. 15 a detailed plan to reduce administrative costs and increase efficiency.

Several questions submitted by staff prior to the address touched on staff fear regarding streamlining. “For them, it resonated

with staff layoffs,” said Billy Kepner, EA communications chair.

“[The memo] is not aimed at staff layoffs,” Garrett answered. “And you’ll also notice that it doesn’t talk about reduction in costs. ... I really am focused on burden.”

Garrett also outlined several areas in which previous streamlining efforts have reduced bureaucratic fat, from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences to the College of Veterinary Medicine and new features in e-SHOP that make buying supplies for campus more efficient.

She aims to increase the visibility of Cornell’s many efforts in the sustainability arena, and wants to find ways to celebrate staff, student and faculty successes, she said in answer to other questions. She encouraged staff to maintain their health and well-being with exercise, moving around while working, eating well, and taking time off and spending it with friends.

Garrett also suggested the campus community use email less frequently, to which the audience responded with strong applause. “It’s amazing what picking up the phone and talking to a person can do. You can resolve things more quickly,” Garrett said. Alternatives such as talking with colleagues in person can lead to a better workplace and better outcomes, she added.

She listed three recent awards that Cornell received reflecting the high quality of staff work, especially for Cornell’s efforts to create a more inclusive workplace. The [2015 Healthy Campus Award](#) recognized Cornell’s public health approach to student health and well-being. The Dave Thomas Foundation, for the ninth year in a row, lauded Cornell for its [adoption-friendly policies](#), and the [HEED award](#) recognized campus inclusion and diversity efforts.

“Thank you for the essential work you do across the university to keep Cornell at the forefront of American higher education. Your efforts support excellence in Cornell’s research, teaching and outreach, and you create an environment where faculty, students and staff together thrive,” Garrett said.

The event began with the presentation of the EA’s Employee Appreciation Award to the Cornell University Police Department. Chief Kathy Zoner accepted the award on behalf of the department. “From the Blue Light escorts to the chief and every member in between, we appreciate your support of the educational mission of the university and all you do to protect the community,” said Greg Mezey, EA executive vice chair.

Cynthia Sedlacek wins people's choice 'Best in Show'

[FIRST PLACE WINNERS](#)

[SECOND PLACE WINNERS](#)

[HONORABLE MENTION](#)

Out of 937 votes, Cynthia Sedlacek’s “A Fanciful Dive” received 336 votes, making it the “people’s choice” for Best in Show for the 2015-16 Pawprint Photo Contest. “A Fanciful Dive” will be reproduced and framed for Sedlacek, compliments of Cornell Print Services.

“A Glimpse of Light,” by Ksenia Verdiyana received 114 votes and “Sunrise Pier,” by Deborah Littlejohn, received 109.

First-place winners, as judged anonymously by three University Communications staff, for each category were: Brian Maley, Adults (“Headman Has a Smoke”), David Russell, Animals (“Eagle Owl Touchdown”), Ksenia Verdiyana, Cornell (“A Glimpse of Light”), Marla Coppolino, Humor (“Need a Corkscrew”), Antonia Ruppel, Landscape (“Evening Jaunt”), David Russell, Nature (“Calamari to Go”), Lu Huang, New Entrants (“Huh?”), Karen Munkenbeck Trotter, Special Effects (“Fall Pond in a New Light”), Deborah Littlejohn, Structures/Buildings (“Sunrise Pier”) and Cynthia Sedlacek, Unspecified (“A Fanciful Dive”). Each first-prize entry then became eligible as a People’s Choice entry. All first-place winners have been notified of their winning by email, and will be able to pick their prizes up from the Pawprint staff, starting Dec. 1 at 312 College Avenue.

Runners-up: Ksenia Verdlyan; Akshay Sawhney; Deborah Littlejohn; Lea Bonnefoy; Lori Radcliff-Woods; Shumin Tan; David Russell; Brian Maley; Helaine Babbage. Runners-up will be mailed a Cornell calendar, compliments of University Photography.

In Appreciation

Thanks to all who contributed to the contest, including the winners and runners-up, and those who deserve honorable mention.

A special thanks to those who sponsored the contest and contributed prizes:

- Athletics and Physical Education, for certificates to sports events
- Cornell Cinema, two guest passes
- Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, for a variety of gifts, including a video, birdwatching book, travel mug and complimentary Lab of Ornithology membership
- Cornell Plantations, for a family membership
- Cornell Print Services, which provided a matted and framed reproduction of the best in show
- Cornell Store, for a gift certificate for purchases
- Gannett Health Services, for two wrist blood pressure cuffs
- Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, for a complimentary family membership, gift book of art from Taiwan and other items
- Schwartz Center for the Performing Arts, for two performance tickets
- Student and Campus Life, for two fleece blankets and five Cornell Dining lunch passes
- Taverna Banfi, for dinner for two
- Transportation Services, for a Campus-to-Campus gift certificate
- University Photography, for a complimentary studio portrait and 2016 Cornell Calendars.

Thanks also to this year's judges and to the many staff and faculty who participated in the People's Choice selection.

Collaboration celebrated at 2015 Town-Gown Awards

Collaboration was the word of the day at the 2015 Town-Gown (TOGO) Awards, held Nov. 14 at Ithaca High School to recognize town and campus partnerships that improve the quality of life in Tompkins County and the Ithaca area. Community and campus members also thanked 14 leaders leaving high-profile elected, appointed or nonprofit positions.

“The university, the city and the county have a long history of cooperation for mutual benefit, and as a relative newcomer, I am grateful for this positive atmosphere and the opportunity to move still further in our relationship,” said Cornell President

Elizabeth Garrett, addressing her first TOGO gathering.

She noted that Cornell has worked with the city to obtain funding to help eradicate hydrilla in Cayuga Lake inlet and that Cornell staff in Washington, D.C., have been involved in efforts to support federal funding for Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit.

Garrett also announced that she signed a new agreement to extend for another six years the Community Housing Development Fund, established in 2009 and funded by the city, county and Cornell. The fund has assisted in the creation of more than 200 affordable housing units that have been or soon will be constructed in our community, she said.

Garrett highlighted collaborations whose representatives were recognized with TOGO awards:

- a partnership between the Cornell Local Roads Program and the city of Ithaca's Department of Public Works, which included the Local Roads Summer Intern Project to collect pavement condition data and, using Cornell software, produce a maintenance schedule for the city.
- funding provided by the Community Foundation of Tompkins County to help the [Cornell Men of Color Council](#) hold a conference promoting networking and peer mentoring between professionals and area high school students.
- a community food system proposal led by the Department of Developmental Sociology and the Groundswell Center for Local Food and Farming, along with others, in cooperation with Engaged Cornell.
- campus and community public safety units, including the Cornell University Police and Environmental Health and Safety departments, who with the Ithaca police and fire departments, the Tompkins County Sheriff's Office and the Cayuga Heights police and fire departments "work every day to ensure our safety and well-being."
- a collaboration between the Ithaca City School District and Cornell Tech in New York City that involved teaching computer coding to elementary students. "In the years to come, I expect to see more such across-the-miles projects and more benefits to Ithaca and Tompkins County as Cornell Tech grows," Garrett said.

Quoting Henry Ford, who said, "Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success," Garrett said she believes "at the broadest level," Cornell and Tompkins County are working together and achieving success together, and "that is something I am both proud of and grateful for, and look forward to continuing."

Those leaving positions who were recognized with TOGO awards at the event were: Marcia Fort, director of Greater Ithaca Activities Center; town of Dryden Supervisor Mary Ann Sumner; Ithaca Common Council member J.R. Clairborne; Ithaca City School District Board of Education members Jay True and Eldred Harris; Karen Friedeborn, youth program administrator at the Ithaca Youth Bureau; Bruce Estes, former managing editor of The Ithaca Journal; Michael McGreevey, vice president for advancement at Wells College; Betty Falcao of the Tompkins County Health Planning Council; Brigid Hubberman, former director of the Family Reading Partnership; and Alphonse Pieper, former executive director of Historic Ithaca.

Garrett also thanked the 10 Meinig Family Cornell National Scholars who held a food drive before the event to benefit the Ithaca Kitchen Cupboard.

The Office of Community Relations, led by Director Gary Stewart, hosted the ceremony, now in its fifth year.

Contributing to the United Way helps local community members

"Several years ago my daughter worked minimum wage to support her young child, and they could barely make ends meet. One month they were unable to pay rent. She went to Catholic Charities, and they helped pay their rent that month! When I asked where the money came from, I learned that Catholic Charities got support from the United Way. So when the Cornell United Way campaign began, I did not hesitate to submit a pledge card and request that Catholic Charities get my donation."

– Penny Givin, Office of Community Relations

The following message was sent this week to the Cornell community by Ted Dodds, Cornell United Way Campaign chair:

Cornell's United Way Campaign is underway, and I'm pleased to report that our community of faculty, staff, and students has raised more than \$194,000 to date.

When help is needed, United Way agencies are there. In fact, every year thousands of Cornellians rely upon United Way services, often without realizing the services are connected with the United Way.

Did you know that your gift to the United Way helps people in Tompkins and surrounding counties meet their immediate, basic needs, while empowering lasting change? The United Way does this by strengthening the three building blocks for a good life: education, income and health.

Cornellians give 40 percent of total gifts each year to the United Way of Tompkins County. Without us, our community would not have many of the services that help people every day. If you can give just one dollar per paycheck, you can fund [a long list of necessities in our community](#). Every dollar we give directly benefits programming and the people most in need – sponsorship, not your donation, covers all United Way administrative costs.

You can designate your gift to a program or agency of your choice, including any non-member 501(c)(3) health and human service agency.

United Way's mission statement is "To improve lives by mobilizing the caring power of our communities." Giving has never been easier with the new online giving system. Show the power of Cornell's caring community by [making your tax-deductible contribution today](#). Hard copy pledge cards are still being mailed out if you choose to give that way. And if you have already contributed to this year's campaign, I thank you most sincerely for your support.

The United Way is focused on creating a better future for [our community](#), and I hope you will give as generously as you are able.

Thank you for considering a gift to the United Way.

Sincerely,

Ted Dodds

CALS uses tech to reduce administrative tasks

Mission: Automate routine tasks so that employees and students can spend more time on high-quality, meaningful work.

Not a new concept, says Rebecca Joffrey: Corporations have been using service technology for years to improve their processes, and for younger generations, having what you want at the touch of your fingertips – whether buying online or communicating with a subset of friends on Facebook – is as natural as breathing. Even better: signing up to receive information automatically rather than hunting for it or remembering deadlines.

Joffrey, director of Interactive Services in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CAL S), would know. She and Ann LaFave, director of CAL S Student Services, are using technology to relegate routine administrative tasks to a few quick keystrokes so that one-to-one interactions with students can focus on complex concerns and the office can better anticipate and meet students' needs. These technologies also respond to President Elizabeth Garrett's call to lessen administrative burden on campus.

"The current student services model of one-on-one training and advising is not sufficient to support the growth in programs at Cornell, the increasing demands from students, parents, alumni and recruiters, and the growing emphasis on assessment and

metrics,” says LaFave. “CALs is applying proven, already developed customer relationship management (CRM) technologies to a wide range of academic processes to improve the overall student services experience.”

CALS Student Services has partnered with students and department leaders to find ways to eliminate paper forms and redundant tasks – often not just automating current processes but reinventing them entirely.

“The overall technology vision starts with the students,” Joffrey says. For instance, CALs students had voiced their challenges in finding the right offices to help them and figuring out where to find information when needed. A social media platform, Chatter, was launched in summer 2013 to give students a venue to ask questions and get answers from peers and staff members, Joffrey says. The same tool allows faculty to “follow” their advisees.

“Last summer, our new student on-boarding community generated 2,400 posts and comments in 12 weeks, with 99 percent of students logging in,” Joffrey says. Logins to CALs Student Services Chatter are up to approximately 10,000 per month.

A recently launched mentoring program helps alumni connect with students for career conversations, resume critiques and mock interviews. More than 750 alumni enrolled in the system in three weeks, and have supported 83 student consultations to date.

A new marketing tool, launched this past summer, helps students in pursuit of their careers by automating the Dyson School’s communications with employers and the career team’s development of a support program for semester-away students. A speakers’ bureau (planned for 2016) will help professors, clubs and event organizers work directly with alumni to book their visits to campus.

Perhaps the greatest time saver for staff came with the implementation of a customer-relations technology, Salesforce, to identify and support students struggling in their classes, LaFave says. Before its launch this fall, faculty would report students having difficulties in a course through a variety of vehicles: spreadsheets, lists, phone calls and emails. Student Services would organize the lists and individually email more than 200 students to suggest resources, such as tutoring.

Now, using a Salesforce application, faculty can review their class lists and report those students in need of help via a web link – indicating the problems they are having (missing classes, failing tests, not completing assignments, etc.) and the steps needed to turn things around.

“This outreach process, which used to take weeks, now takes minutes,” says LaFave. The process is expected to decrease the number of students who end up with difficulties at the end of the semester, she said.

These technologies adapt easily to educational settings, says Joffrey. CALs Student Services isn’t the only unit at Cornell deploying these tools. The Samuel Curtis Johnson Graduate School of Management has adopted Chatter and is actively using other CRM technologies. ILR and the School of Hotel Administration are using CRM for executive education and corporate outreach. Recently, CALs Student Services received a \$150,000 grant from the Salesforce Foundation to work with 15 other universities or colleges to customize additional tools for higher education.
