



## The Latest in Pawprint: May 6, 2016

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### Employee Assembly election season has begun



The Employee Assembly (EA) is increasing its body from 19 to 28 staff members who want to make a difference and have their voices heard about issues facing staff at Cornell now and in the future. The 28 members will represent academic colleges and units, staff units, and affinity-based seats.

Staff involvement is needed in two areas: 1) registering by noon today, May 6, if you wish to be a candidate for EA membership, and 2) voting for EA candidates during the online election, May 17-19.

#### **Candidate registration**

The registration process for interested candidates began this past Monday; the deadline to register as a candidate for the election of EA members is today, May 6, at noon.

If you are interested in being a candidate, you will need to fill out a candidate registration form [online](#) by noon today. You will need to provide your full name, the seat you are running for, your net ID, a personal statement (up to 1250 characters including spaces), and a photo. (If you need a photo taken it can be done at 109 Day Hall.) Be a voice for your colleagues and help the university to understand the needs of staff members in a meaningful way.

#### **EA members election**

The election will be held online, May 17-19. All employees will receive an email notifying them of the start of the election and providing information about the candidates.

Watch your emails for more news and updates from the EA.

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## **President Hunter Rawlings on priorities and 'pinch-hitting'**

*In an interview with the Cornell Chronicle, Hunter R. Rawlings III, Cornell president emeritus and professor emeritus of classics, discussed “pinch-hitting” as Cornell’s interim president, taking on this leadership role April 25 in the stead of the late President Elizabeth Garrett, who died of colon cancer March 6. He also outlined some of the challenges ahead for Cornell and higher education.*

**Last year you announced you would retire from the presidency of the Association of American Universities (AAU). What motivated you to return to Cornell as interim president?**

When the board chairman calls and says “we have a real emergency,” you say “yes” – for me, that’s a no-doubter, because Cornell had a tragedy with Beth’s death. My wife, Elizabeth, and I felt that if we could help by pinch-hitting, we would like to do that.

We like Cornell enormously. We keep coming back, and we have a lot of friends here and an extremely high regard for Cornell. My colleagues in the Classics Department are great scholars and teachers. I enjoy being in their midst and collaborating with them. For me, professionally in the Classics, this is heaven.

**As president of the AAU you dealt with issues from a national perspective. How will that benefit Cornell? What are the top issues facing higher education?**

I spent the past five years working quite closely with the presidents and chancellors of all 62 AAU universities. Two AAU members are Canadian, 60 are American, and of those 60, 35 are public universities and 25 are private. They are the strongest research universities in the U.S. and, to great extent, in the world.

AAU focuses on the research environment – federal funding for research, research policy, all of the compliance issues in the realm of research regulations; it works very closely with federal agencies, with the Obama administration, with Congress.

In addition, it focuses on graduate education, and in my five years we also put a lot of attention on undergraduate education in the sciences and math.

A lot of national attention has focused on the problems faced by public universities, with the withdrawal of state support. That, in turn, often leads to tuition increases to try to make up the gap, and that then brings public attention to student debt and default on loans.

All these issues are front and center here. Cornell is one of the top research universities, and it has its private aspects and its public aspects as the land-grant university of New York state.

**What at Cornell has most changed since you arrived in 1995 as its 10th president?**

I am not so much struck by change as by continuity. I think of Cornell as having immensely strong faculty, a great student body, very devoted staff and an amazingly loyal alumni body. All of that is unchanged.

Certainly one of the new things is Cornell Tech. I’ll be leaving for New York City in the next few days, and I’m very much interested in seeing the development of that new campus on Roosevelt Island.

**You have said you plan to continue with priorities President Garrett laid out. How will you advance them in your interim role?**

In terms of the student learning and living environment, North Campus and West Campus – which were newly developed in

my day – are now mature. It is quite interesting to me to see how well they are doing. North Campus is a place where freshmen now feel at home. On West Campus, there is tremendous success. Students vote with their feet, and it is pretty clear that they like to stay on campus. We've had terrific faculty leadership on West Campus; the house deans have been extraordinary in the ways they've built programming for their students. It will be fun for me to try to help continue that momentum.

Certainly the biological sciences in Ithaca have developed a lot since my day. There are more ties now with Weill Cornell Medicine, and there will be strong ties within the departments here in Ithaca and on the Cornell Tech campus. I want to learn more about that.

**Are there initiatives of your own you would like to champion?**

I am a pinch hitter; it is my job to try to provide a little stability before the new president comes in. I don't see this as a time for many new initiatives, but I do want to address some broader public issues.

I am a strong believer in the value of the humanities. I want to talk with a lot of humanists here and talk publicly about the humanities.

I think today there is so much emphasis across the country on careerism and on seeing a university education from a purely utilitarian point of view, an instrumentalist point of view – that college is simply about getting a job. I want to try to balance that inclination with the idea that, yes, college will help you get a job – many jobs and very good ones – but college is also a time when you want to develop yourself as a person. And you want to become, frankly, a critical thinking, independent citizen.

If you want to look forward to a whole career, in which you're likely to have different kinds of jobs, then the liberal arts education is best. I really am serious about saying that we need citizens who can think through the complex issues that we confront in an open democracy, an educated citizenry who can think for themselves and make good judgments.

**In the short time she led Cornell, Elizabeth Garrett began a strategic planning process and formed the College of Business. How will you move those initiatives forward?**

I have a whole lot to learn about both of those. Those are clearly on the front burner, and I'll be working with Provost Mike Kotlikoff in particular. He is a terrific partner in this because he is well-informed and so experienced; he knows Cornell well. He was doing two arduous jobs for a few months, and he knows a ton as a result.

**You traveled to China as interim president in 2005-06. Can you talk about the academic relationship between Cornell and China since then and about the future of Cornell's international reach?**

Start with the number of Chinese students now coming to American universities as undergraduates. That never happened before. We had graduate students, but now we have 300,000 Chinese students at American colleges and universities. It just started to explode in 2007. We also have a large number of South Korean students, students from Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan.

And then you have American universities going overseas, not just to China but to Europe, the Middle East, Africa. We have a large international dimension, a land-grant mission writ large.

**What's on the immediate horizon?**

In the next few weeks I want to inform myself about a number of matters on the front burner: budget issues affecting faculty retention and hiring; research regulations sapping faculty time and energy; student concerns about financial aid policies; the search for a new dean of Weill Cornell Medicine; the development of the Cornell Tech campus. But, to be candid, I will also spend a good deal of time talking with individual faculty members whose scholarship and research interest me. I had a breakfast meeting with a group of faculty members from different colleges a couple of days ago and discovered some remarkable projects on the frontiers of knowledge. Nothing is more instructive or more fun than that at Cornell. This place brims with brainpower.

## The University Ombudsman: A welcoming, relevant resource for all



At some point, students, faculty, or staff all need help to navigate Cornell's complex environment. Left to our own instincts we can unknowingly jeopardize relationships or long-term success in our work. Having a safe and equitable place to turn for help is critical.

Ombudsman, a Swedish term dating back to the 1800's, is used world-wide to designate impartial, confidential and independent offices that field inquiries and concerns. The term is cumbersome, but the team who staff Cornell's Office of the University Ombudsman couldn't be more welcoming and approachable. Charles Walcott, Linda Falkson, and Helen Lang collaboratively staff the office. Lang, the office coordinator, is the first point of contact when making an appointment.

The first Cornell University Ombudsman, Alice H. Cook, was appointed in 1969 as one of the first such roles in higher education, created during the campus uprisings of the 1960's. The position of university ombudsman has been held by a member of the Cornell faculty ever since, and in 2011, Charles Walcott, former dean of the university faculty and professor emeritus of neurobiology and behavior, was named to the role. His relationship with Cornell spanning 35 years and his extensive background on the academic side of university translate perfectly to the position.

Walcott first experienced Cornell as a graduate student in zoology, returning in 1981 as a full professor and the Lab of Ornithology's first Louis Agassiz Fuertes director in 1992. He later resumed teaching and research, going on to lead the Division of Biological Sciences and the Department of Neurobiology and Behavior, before being elected as associate and then dean of the University Faculty.

"In all these roles I got to know a lot about the university, the administration and trustees – how the place is run," Walcott says. "The whole idea [of being the ombudsman] is not a foreign, strange or peculiar kind of role," Walcott says. "In part, it's what you do as a good administrator at Cornell, which is to help people do their jobs better, be supportive and listen well."

Joining Walcott in the office is associate ombudsman Linda Falkson, who brings a background in policy, law and judicial administration. Falkson grew up in Ithaca and graduated from Cornell in 1986. She has a law degree, was in general practice and was the city prosecutor for the City of Ithaca before coming to Cornell in 1998 as the associate and then deputy judicial administrator. She worked in the Office of the Judicial Administrator for 10 years enforcing Cornell's Code of Conduct. Falkson saw the opportunity to join the Office of the Ombudsman in 2008 as a unique opportunity to do exactly what she wanted to do: help people through one-on-one interactions.

"One of my goals was to integrate who I am – what my personality is – and what I do professionally. I think this job manages to do that," Falkson says. "I feel like I have the ability to pretty quickly develop trust, which is a large component of the work. I know Cornell well, and I'm able to help someone else figure out what he or she might want or need, rather than what I might

prefer in a situation.”

The office interacts directly with visitors on a wide range of issues. Students face challenges with housing and academics; staff experience employment-related difficulties; faculty often seek help with tenure issues. Ombudsmen meet one-on-one and talk through options for paths forward to navigate organizational bureaucracy, human relationships and conflict.

“The ombudsman is here as a neutral resource to empower people, let them know the other resources available and help them figure out what’s in their best interest,” says Falkson.

The position of ombudsman in higher education continues to evolve, and there is a shift in the profession to standardize and professionalize the role. Falkson is a certified ombudsman through the [International Ombudsman Association](#) (IOA) and takes courses, attends professional training and presents at national conferences to maintain the certification.

Falkson is co-chairing a Title IX task force of the IOA and she’s an ex officio member of Cornell’s Council on Sexual Violence Prevention. Enacted in 1972, Title IX is landmark federal civil rights law that prohibits sex discrimination in education. Falkson says it has been important to keep the role of ombudsman as a confidential resource on campus for individuals to discuss issues related to Title IX. It’s just another way the office remains a relevant resource in Cornell’s caring community.

### **Related LINKs**

Office of the University Ombudsman

<http://www.ombudsman.cornell.edu>

Staff Notes with Linda Falkson on CornellCast

<http://www.cornell.edu/video/staff-notes-linda-falkson-and-the-ombudsmans-office>

Charlie Walcott remains active in retirement

<http://news.cornell.edu/stories/2010/02/charles-walcott-remains-active-cu-retirement>

Office of the University Ombudsman welcomes all

<http://pawprint.cornell.edu/?q=articles/2012/06/ombudsmans-office-welcomes-the-cornell-community>

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## **AA&D volunteers gain perspective, learn needs of others**

By volunteering, staff members from the Division of Alumni Affairs and Development (AAD) have learned just how widespread food insecurity is in local communities and how varied in their lived experience simple daily routines can be.

Their volunteer efforts this semester have been documented in response to a “call-to-action” presented by the division’s Inclusion and Diversity Team (IDT) to promote inclusion by increasing staff members’ understanding and awareness of difference in daily activities.

Five AAD staff members– Marsha Emerson, administrative assistant; Chelle Lust, administrative assistant; Penny McNeil, administrative assistant; Kathleen Davis, administrative services manager; and Carrie Corbin, trust officer– decided to work for the Immaculate Conception Food Pantry.

“We chose this activity because we wanted to do something as a group, we had a contact at the food pantry and we could walk there from our offices,” Davis said. “Then when we called the food pantry for more information, the staff were so appreciative of our interest, we just couldn’t say ‘no.’ It was great experience and something we hope to do again.”

Reflecting the feelings of the Trust Office volunteers, McNeil said, “Our experience at the food pantry broadened our perception of just how critical food pantries are to communities and how generous supporters are to the needs of the community.”

Others volunteered for Loaves and Fishes. Adrian Prieto '07, assistant director for AAD's Corporate and Foundation Relations and IDT co-chair, said he volunteered to serve a meal at Loaves and Fishes because it “provides a genuine connection to individuals in the community who simply have a different experience in their lives (right now) than mine. It's powerful to be able see a tangible benefit to someone else as a result of a couple of hours of your time. It's not just about making a meal per say, it's about interacting with others and taking what you learned there – about difference, about including others – back to work in your everyday lives.”

To encourage staff to engage in volunteerism, the IDT worked with the division's senior leadership team to grant two hours of paid leave per person, to be used by the end of June 2016, to volunteer in the community, preferably with other AAD staff. Volunteers were asked to then provide a short, written reflection on their volunteer experiences – how those experiences affected the volunteers' behavior in the workplace and made their perspectives more open and inclusive. Volunteers were also asked to incorporate their experiences in their individual development plan discussion as they relate to Cornell's “Skills for Success.”

Local and regional AAD staff reported volunteering for agencies as diverse as the Kiwanis Club, with projects associated with Rescue Mission, the Salvation Army, and Adopt-a-highway cleanup; the dish truck at Earth Day; a dog rescue adoption event; the Community Arts Partnership; and various church and temple programs.

By volunteering, said Lena Brooks, major gifts associate for AAD in the College of Arts and Sciences, “I meet people from all walks of life and learn about different perspectives and ways of looking at things. I am more cognizant that everyone has something to offer and that we can learn from each other if we take the time to listen. By volunteering we have greater empathy and are less likely to judge others. All these lessons can be directly translated to the workplace and bring about better understanding, better relationships and better workplace outcomes.”

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## **CARE Fund auction: where giver and receiver both benefit**

Going once...going twice...gone to Sally and Rich Carland.

Last November, Sally Carland, finance coordinator for the Robert Frederick Smith School of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering, supported the Emergency CARE (Cornellians Aiding and Responding to Employees) Fund by bidding in the fund's annual online auction. She won: after their swimming and diving season concluded, athletes from the Cornell Swimming and Diving teams spent three hours helping Sally and her husband with their spring projects. The teams provided the labor; the Carlands provided tools, pizza and soda.

“We had a great time with the Cornell swimming and diving teams,” Sally Carland said. “They were energetic, friendly and hard-working. My husband, Rich, and I are so grateful for the volume of work completed and for the students' sharing a small part of themselves with us. We greatly valued their efforts, and it was a memorable experience to work with them.”

Each fall semester, the CARE Fund holds the online auction to raise support so that it can respond to Cornell employees in crisis who are in financial need as the result of an unplanned circumstance. Last year, the fund raised more than \$7,000 through the donation of 147 items and the bidding participation of more than 300.