



The Latest in Pawprint: December 9, 2016

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Jason Kahabka receives dedicated service award



Jason Kahabka '98, M.S. '03, admits that he should have known something was up: a rather short agenda was distributed in advance of the Nov. 29 staff meeting being held in the Big Red Barn, itself an unusual location for a meeting.

Instead, Kahabka, associate dean for administration at the Graduate School, was presented with the George Peter Award for Dedicated Service.

Kahabka says he was “blown away” when he walked in and was greeted by a crowd of more than 50 friends and colleagues. Ulysses Smith, chair of the Employee Assembly (EA), presented the award, which is given by the EA to staff members nominated by their colleagues who “consistently demonstrate a high degree of excellence in the performance of their duties and who prove their willingness to extend themselves to help others and go above and beyond the normal expectations of their job responsibilities.”

As associate dean, Kahabka helps support more than 100 graduate fields, working with graduate faculty, staff and 5,100 graduate and professional students. He supervises a team and oversees graduate admissions, student services, graduate student fellowships and travel grants, technology support and data management.

Barbara Knuth, senior vice provost and dean of the Graduate School, lauded Kahabka’s “strong people skills, in combination with really finely developed technological skills,” and called him a “successful collaborator” on many levels: with the student services staff, working with them as a team and giving them the freedom to work independently; with the Graduate School leadership team; and with others throughout the university, who “really look forward” to interacting with him.

Kahabka is known for using his “sense of humanity” and his knowledge of policy to work through some very tough situations, Knuth said.

Allan Bishop, associate vice president for human resources, said Kahabka has “made a tremendous impression on his colleagues, staff and students.” Bishop quoted Janna Lamey, assistant dean for student life at the Graduate School and a recipient of the George Peter award in 2011, who described Kahabka’s positive impact on staff: “We all want to work for Jason because of his focus on staff development and team building.”

Bishop said other nominators noted that Kahabka’s interactions with the graduate community often occur when students are in distress, and in those situations he is known for his problem-solving skills, thoughtful consideration, care and compassion.

Michael Skinner, graduate student services representative, and Marcia Sawyer, graduate field assistant and George Peter award recipient in 2008, also highlighted Kahabka’s dedication, motivation, imagination, accessibility and knowledge – and his commitment to graduate students.

Kahabka said it is “great to work to find solutions with people who really care.”

“I am shocked and overwhelmed to receive this award,” he said after the ceremony. “There are many evenings I leave work thinking about all the tasks and important projects that I hoped to complete that day but couldn’t because I simply ran out of time. The kind words of support I heard from my colleagues today help to remind me that we are all trying to make Cornell better, and that even the small things we do can really be meaningful for someone else’s work.”

2016 Flexible Spending Account reminders

Medical FSA:

- If you or your family members are enrolled in a Flexible Spending Account (FSA) medical care reimbursement account for 2016, you must incur all expenses by Dec. 31, 2016. This is a change from prior years, which allowed expenses through March 15 of the following year.
- This year, up to \$500 of unused money in your 2016 medical care FSA account will be rolled over into a 2017 FSA account. Claims for reimbursement must be submitted by April 30, 2017. Money remaining in your 2016 FSA account above the \$500 rollover limit on April 30 will be lost. The \$500 that is rolled over must be used for eligible medical expenses incurred between Jan. 1 and Dec. 31, 2017, or it, too, will be forfeited. The \$500 rollover does not offset the 2017 election amount; it is added to it.

Dependent care FSA:

- Dependent care flexible spending accounts have different rules than medical accounts. Participants can incur expenses for reimbursement through March 15, 2017, against their 2016 annual amount.
- Claims must be submitted to PayFlex by April 30, 2017; after April 30 unused funds will be forfeited.
- It is important that 2016 claims are submitted prior to submitting 2017 claims so that 2016 funds will be exhausted prior to 2017 dollars being used.

Log in to the Cornell [PayFlex website](#) to:

- submit claims for expenses incurred between Jan. 1 and Dec. 31, 2016, for your medical care FSA;
- submit claims for expenses incurred between Jan. 1, 2016, and March 15, 2017, for your dependent care FSA; and
- view claims prior to each deadline that were denied for reimbursement due to incomplete documentation.

You must re-enroll in an FSA every year

There is no automatic re-enrollment process – you must take action during your enrollment period to elect a 2017 FSA. The endowed open enrollment was Nov. 1-18. The open enrollment period for contract college faculty and staff began Nov. 14 and

continues through 5 p.m. EST Dec. 16.

Questions?

Contact Benefit Services at 607-255-3936 or via email at benefits@cornell.edu if you have questions.

An end-of-the-year message for Cornell staff

Mary G. Opperman, vice president and chief human resources officer, shares the following message with Cornell staff:

Dear staff colleagues,

The end of the year can be a stressful time for many of us. There is added tension in our nation and community this year. At Cornell, we remain committed to providing opportunities where different views and voices can be freely and respectfully expressed. As a community, we must continue every effort to foster a safe and inclusive workplace. I also hope each of you will go to extra lengths to care for yourselves and that we will all invest time in and attention to friends, family and colleagues, including those whose perspectives may be different from our own.

As our university [Caring Community](#) website avows, we take our responsibility seriously to look out for one another. There are a variety of resources on campus that you, or a fellow colleague, may find helpful – a few are listed below. Please take advantage of these support services if you need them, and also share with colleagues who you think may benefit as well.

- Free and confidential guidance and support is available to all staff through the [Faculty and Staff Assistance Program \(FSAP\)](#). Visit their website for details or call 607-255-2673 (5-COPE) Monday through Friday 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m.
- Our diverse opinions are what make Cornell a great place to teach, conduct research and work. Many resources and opportunities for exchange are available on campus. You can find a robust list of resources on the [Caring Community website](#). You can learn more about Cornell's commitment to inclusion and opportunities to advance dialogue and understanding by visiting [diversity.cornell.edu](#).
- [Gannett Health Services](#) offers resources and advice for managing stress, including where to go for support, and a listing of weekly events that can help to maintain balance in your life.
- Cornell is committed to maintaining a climate of civility, decency, and respect. Cornell community members who observe an action that negatively impacts our commitment to diversity and inclusion are encouraged to utilize the Reporting Bias System and the online reporting form located at [biasconcerns.cornell.edu](#). Reporting, understanding, and preventing unacceptable behaviors such as bias, discrimination, and harassment are essential to maintaining our caring community.

Be kind to yourself and one another.

Sincerely,

Mary G. Opperman
Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer

Planning for winter weather

The following message from KyuJung Whang, vice president for infrastructure, properties and planning, and Joanne DeStefano, executive vice president and chief financial officer, was distributed to deans, directors and department heads Dec. 2.

Winter is approaching and it is time for faculty and staff to review their units' inclement weather staffing plans.

Cornell University offices generally remain in operation, classes continue and regular services are provided despite adverse weather conditions. Even in times of inclement weather, university employees are asked to continue meeting the academic, research and student support needs of the Cornell community.

University operating status

The university remains open and observes its schedules in all weather unless the vice president for infrastructure properties and planning determines that conditions warrant a closing or delayed opening. Careful attention is given to the expected intensity and duration of a storm in reaching that decision. Once the decision has been made, instructions will be communicated to the university community as quickly as possible, and are updated as necessary.

Stay informed – Cornell advisories and alerts are communicated via these platforms:

- CUINFO Alerts website: cuinfo.cornell.edu/alerts
- [CornellALERT \(Emergency Notification\)](http://emergency.cornell.edu/alert/) voice and text messages. To receive CornellALERT messages on your phone, follow the instructions at <http://emergency.cornell.edu/alert/>
- Inclement weather phone: (607) 255-3377

Employee travel and time

If the university remains open in adverse weather, even when a county or municipality makes an announcement to “avoid unnecessary travel” – travel for work is considered necessary travel – faculty, administrators and staff should make reasonable efforts to maintain their regular work schedules, but are advised to avoid undue risks in traveling. Supervisors should be flexible regarding a staff member's individual needs during inclement weather.

Employees who anticipate arriving late or not at all should notify their immediate supervisor as soon as possible. With supervisory approval, staff may charge their time off to accrued health and personal leave or vacation. Alternatively, and with supervisory approval, nonexempt staff may request to make up the time in the same workweek or take leave without pay.

Employees who provide essential services

Essential service employees are those needed on campus to meet the needs of students, research programs or central operations when the university is closed. To read more about information pertaining to employees who provide essential services and associated supervisory responsibilities, visit the [Environmental Health and Safety web site](#).

Inclement weather policy

Policy 8.2, Inclement Weather, can be found on the [University Policy Office web page](#). Contact Environmental Health and Safety at (607) 255-8200 or askehs@cornell.edu about essential service employees. Questions about compensation should be directed to your supervisor or to the local [college/unit Human Resources representative](#).

Winter parking, campus alerts and other important links

Winter parking rules are in effect Dec. 1 - April 1: Winter overnight parking rules are in effect Dec. 1 - April 1, whenever it is snowing, or snow is in the forecast; winter break parking for students is available from December 16 - January 24; and City of Ithaca odd/even parking is in effect from November 1 - April 1.

For complete information, visit <https://ipp.cornell.edu/content/winter-and-break-parking-rules>.

Campus alerts: For updates and other alert messages, go to <http://cuinfo.cornell.edu/alerts>; this site is used to distribute information about impacts to university infrastructure and properties, including facilities, roadways, parking lots and pedestrian

access routes.

Special conditions email notifications: SpecialConditions-L is an electronic mailing list that distributes notification of road closures, construction delays, or other unusual events on campus. To subscribe, send an e-mail message to:

SpecialConditions-L-request@cornell.edu

The body of the message should read, "join" (without the quotes).

Emergencies: Cornell Police call 911 or (607) 255-1111 (from cellular phones)

Facility issues: Infrastructure Properties and Planning Customer Service (607) 255-5322

University operating status and inclement weather phone: (607) 255-3377

Transportation information:

- TCAT (607) 277-RIDE
- Chemung County Transit (607) 734-5211
- Cortland Public Transit (607) 758-3383
- Campus to Campus (607) 254-8747
- Shortline (607) 277-8800

Cornell Commuter and Parking Services: (607) 255-7275

Soup & Hope opens 10th season Jan. 19

Since Cal Walker opened the first Soup & Hope series of winter talks in 2008, more than 50 speakers have touched, inspired, motivated and stirred the hearts of those who gather Thursdays at noon in Sage Chapel. Stories have come from a wide range of Cornell staff, faculty, students, alumni and community members who have shared their experiences of hope and courage, change and challenge.

Stories are shared among friends and colleagues, over bowls of hot soup and bread or roll, provided free through Cornell Dining. Mark your calendars now; plan to bring a soup bowl and a friend.

The tenth anniversary series will include talks and introductions by individuals who have been involved in the program since the beginning. The series will open Jan. 19 at noon in Sage Chapel with words by Soup & Hope's founder, Janet Shortall, and featuring special treats as well as soup and roll.

Other speakers in the series include:

Feb. 2: Gunnery Sgt. Thomas Herrera

Feb. 16: Leslyn McBean Clairborne

Mar. 2: Timothy Shenk

Mar. 16: Frances Yufen Lee Mehta

Mar. 30: Kimerly Cornish

Soup and Hope is sponsored by Cornell Dining, Cornell United Religious Work and Gannett Health Services. Additional support comes from the Office of the Ombudsman, Engaged Learning + Research, Residential and New Student Programs, and

Cornell United Way campaign passes halfway mark

The 2017 Cornell United Way Campaign has passed the halfway mark of its \$750,000 goal for the 2016-17 academic year.

In a memo sent earlier this week, campaign co-chairs Andy Noel, the Meakem♦Smith Director of Athletics and Physical Education, and Kathy Zoner, chief of Cornell Police, announced that Cornell had reached 42 percent of that goal. An uptick in pledges has since increased the amount raised to more than 50 percent.

Typically, many Cornell community members give to the United Way during the month of December. Noel and Zoner extended “heartfelt thanks” to those who have contributed thus far, and noted that this time of year “is an especially good time to make a United Way gift in honor of someone you love, which is an increasingly popular holiday option.”

All gifts aid members of the community in need, with the Cornell campaign providing nearly 40 percent of the annual Tompkins County United Way campaign goal. In addition, thousands of Cornellians rely on services from the United Way of Tompkins County, or have at some point in the past.

Through the Cornell United Way campaign:

- A dollar per paycheck can help address [a long list of needs in the community](#). Every dollar given by individuals to the campaign directly benefits programming.
 - 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, in or outside Tompkins County.
 - Giving is easy with [Cornell’s online giving system or by using a hard-copy pledge card](#) or by emailing community_relations@cornell.edu.
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Child safety-seat inspection Dec. 10

Cornell Police will hold a child safety-seat inspection station Dec. 10, from 9 a.m. until noon, at the Cornell Grounds Department, 307 Palm Rd.

The Cornell Police will have trained child passenger safety technicians on site to provide instruction in the proper installation, use and maintenance of child safety seats.

For more information, contact: The Cornell Police Crime Prevention Unit, G-2 Barton Hall, 607-255-7305.
