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Staff graduates are an inspiration to others, president says



At the 21st annual Staff Graduate Reception May 23, President Martha E. Pollack recognized two staff members receiving a Ph.D., 23 receiving a master's degree, and one a Bachelor of Science degree. Seventeen of these staff members earned their degrees at Cornell through the Employee Degree Program and nine at other accredited institutions through the Tuition Assistance Program.

“All of you – every graduate here – have reached an important personal goal, and you are an inspiration to your colleagues,” said Pollack, who noted the perseverance required to earn a degree while working full time. “Every day you contribute to the university's mission, and now, with new knowledge and skills, and a new sense of accomplishment, your contributions will be even more valuable,” she added.

Pollack highlighted in particular the two Ph.D. recipients – Joe Druso, who earned a doctorate in pharmacology at the College of Veterinary Medicine, and Joan Paddock, who earned a doctorate in nutritional sciences from the Division of Nutritional Sciences – and the achievements of two other graduates, Michael Annunziata and Nancy Bell.

Annunziata, a Cornell senior investment analyst who earned an MBA at the Samuel Curtis Johnson Graduate School of Management, won the Cornell Venture Challenge last month with his business partner for their startup called Natural Cuts, and then won \$10,000 in the New York State Business Competition. Bell, undergraduate minor coordinator in the Charles H. Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management, earned a master's degree in human resources and organizational behavior from the ILR School while furthering a nonprofit she founded that offers Cornell students experiential learning opportunities in her hometown in Honduras.

Mary Opperman, vice president and chief human resources officer, told staff graduates that Cornell “takes immense pride in your accomplishments” and noted their ability to balance work, home life and studies; to explore new avenues to advance their skills and further their careers; and to immerse themselves in a constantly changing learning environment.

“Your degree stands for so much more than the mastery of a field of study, although that in and of itself is very important,” Opperman said. “Your degree represents sacrifice, dedication, courage and a steadfast desire to shape your own destiny.”

Staff members receiving a Cornell degree were:

- Michael Annunziata, MBA, senior investment analyst in the Investment Office;
- Nancy Bell, MILR, undergraduate minor coordinator in the Dyson School;
- Jamie Bellamore, M.M.H., assistant restaurant manager, Mac’s Café and Terrace Restaurant at the Statler Hotel;
- Patrick Blankenship, MBA, instructor in physical education;
- Jess Cisco, MBA, senior human resources consultant in Human Resources;
- Joan Curtiss, M.P.S., project manager in Infrastructure Properties and Planning (IPP);
- Marijke Monique de Jongh, M.P.A., visiting lecturer and student adviser in the Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps;
- Joseph Druso, Ph.D., technician in molecular medicine, College of Veterinary Medicine;
- Wendi Hawkins, M.P.S., associate director of human resources in the Cornell S.C. Johnson College of Business;
- Mark Howe, M.Eng., manager of utilities distribution and energy management in IPP;
- Matthew Kozlowski, M.P.S., green building program manager in IPP;
- Steve Mandl, B.S., software engineer in IPP;
- Joan Paddock, Ph.D., senior extension associate in Nutritional Sciences;
- Michael Roberts, M.P.S., natural areas management and safety in IPP;
- Christopher Rogers, MBA, financial analyst in Budget and Planning;
- William Searle, MBA, research and planning associate in Institutional Research and Planning; and
- Jing Zhang, M.P.S., technician in Plant Biology.

Receiving a degree from another college or university were:

- Bernard Amponsah, M.S. in hospitality management from Thomas Edison State University, electrician in IPP;
- Becky Callan, MBA from the State University of New York at Oswego, data analyst and operations coordinator in the Animal Health Diagnostic Center;
- Celeste Carmichael, M.S. from Quinnipiac University, program development and accountability specialist for Cornell Cooperative Extension;
- Elizabeth Handler, M.S. from Indiana University, Pennsylvania, health and safety specialist in Environmental Health and Safety;
- Lillian Isacks, MSISA from Norwich University, infrastructure security administrator and systems administrator, Cornell Information Technologies;
- Megan Keene, M.S. from Southern New Hampshire University, accounts representative in Civil and Environmental Engineering;
- Jinhee Roper, MBA from Columbia College, accounts representative, IPP;
- Alida Smith, M.S. from Indiana Wesleyan University, human resources assistant in the Vet College human resources office; and
- Heather Somers, M.S. from Elmira College, instructional technical specialist in Academic Technologies.

Biographies of the staff graduates were read by employee-elected trustee Chad Coates and Employee Assembly Chair Ulysses Smith ’14; Teddy Comora ’18 provided music for the event.

The reception was sponsored by the Employee Assembly and the Division of Human Resources.

CIT staff celebrated for service

At the department's town meeting May 18, Cornell Information Technologies (CIT) celebrated about 50 staff members who have been Cornell employees for 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40 or more years of service. All of those recognized were given a book and certificate and thanked for their dedication and commitment.

Particularly impressive, Rick Cochran, Mariann Carpenter and Carl Moravec have been with Cornell for 44, 47 and 48 years, respectively. Other staff members celebrating a fifth-year anniversary between 5 and 35 years were:

- Celebrating 35 years: Ken Pendell and Ken Ridley.
- Celebrating 30 years: Sandi Boles, Rich Marisa, Rick Polcaro, Leisha Redfield and Diane Sempler.
- Celebrating 25 years: Ceila Davila, Pat Graham, Bobby Griffin, Lillian Isacks, Beth Goelzer Lyons, Juan Salomon and Brian Witchey.
- Celebrating 20 years: Don Buttaccio, Roberta Militello, George Norman, Bob Talda and Kim Tholen.
- Celebrating 15 years: Anthony Adinolfi, Garry Chen, Greg Christofferson, Tim Cornwell, Tony Dellinger, Chad Dumont, Dick Herold, Derek Messie, Michael Neville and Andy Page.
- Celebrating 10 years: Amber Aiken, David Beardsley, Patty Carnell, Kelly Chan, Kent Dalpan, RJ Davies, Danica Fisher, Eric Johnson, Chris Lyons, Todd Maniscalco, Irina Naydich, Kim Nicholson, Kent Ross, Loree Scaglione, Andy Slusar and Jason Stuart.
- Celebrating 5 years: Ed Klimowicz and Marty Sullivan.

Bike to Work/School Day brings new, encore participants

Stanley Mcfall, a Tompkins County resident and Cornell staff member who for the past five years has participated in Bike to Work/School Day, won an overnight stay at The Cornell Club in New York City, while Neeraj Kulkarni, a Cornell graduate student participating for the second year, won a round-trip ticket on the Campus-to-Campus Express Bus Service to NYC.

These were two of the 12 prize winners, whose prizes ranged in value from \$35 to just under \$400, who participated in the Bike to Work/School Day commuter event May 19, coordinated by Cornell Transportation Services, Cornell Recreational Services and Way2Go, part of Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County.

About 270 participants, including about 220 Tompkins County residents and 12 residents from outside the county, took part in the annual event to showcase environmentally friendly ways to commute to work or school. Participants included 124 Cornell staff, 36 graduate students, 27 faculty, 16 spouses or partners, six retirees and five Cornell undergraduates.

"More than 100 participants were first timers for the event," said Kerry Howell, Cornell Recreation Services employee and event coordinator. "It was incredible to see so many happy smiling people riding their bikes to work and school while sharing the roadways with cars and buses on such a beautiful sunny morning."

The Day Hall, Helen Newman Hall, and Teagle Hall-Lynah Lot breakfast stop-and-go stations received the greatest number of participants, sponsored respectively by Cornell Police and Big Red Bikes; Cornell Recreational Services; and New York State Parks, Cornell Transportation Services, and Cornell Campus-to-Campus.

Other table sponsors were AGAVA, AIDS Ride For Life, BorgWarner, Boxy Bikes, Bike Walk Tompkins, Cayuga Waterfront Trail, The Cornell Club, Cornell Dairy Plant, Cornell Veterinary Staff Council, E-Bike Ithaca, Finger Lakes Cycling Club, Greenstar Natural Foods Market, IT@Cornell, Recycled Ithaca Bikes, Tabernacle Church, Tetra Tech and TransportationCamp2017.

Prize sponsors included The Bike Rack, Cayuga Ski and Cyclery, The Cornell Club, Cornell Transportation Services – Cornell Campus-to-Campus, Finger Lakes Running and Triathlon Store, and Proviz.

For more photographs, see Cornell Transportation Services' [Bike to Work/School Facebook](#) page.

Reminder: 2017 Photo Contest submission deadline is Sept. 22

Reminder: the summer is going fast and the deadline for digital photo submissions for the 2017 Photo Contest is Sept. 22.

Join those who are already submitting photos electronically by emailing your digital entries to Aggie Binger, akm4@cornell.edu, with the subject line: 2017 Photo Contest. Entries will not be posted online until AFTER the deadline is past.

The following information was posted in Pawprint in June:

The tentative schedule for this year's contest is:

- Sept. 22, 11:59 p.m.: deadline for all photo submissions (note: date is earlier than recent previous years)
- Oct. 13: winners for each category announced; voting begins for People's Choice among these winners. Deadline for voting: Oct. 20
- Oct. 27: People's Choice and Grand Prize winners announced
- Oct. 30-Nov. 17: prizes available for pick-up or delivery

Guidelines are the same as for last year:

- All Cornell staff, faculty, students, alumni and retirees are eligible to enter and each can submit up to four entries, one in each of nine categories: adults, animals, Cornell (any location), humor, landscape, nature, special effects (digital enhancement), structures/buildings and unspecified.
- Faculty and staff who have not submitted any photos to the contest in the past three years can choose to enter one photo in the new entrants category, on any subject. They can also choose not to enter any of their four photos in the new entrants category.
- Family members of Cornellians, professional photographers or their support staff, student photography majors and contest judges are not eligible.
- First-place winners from each category will be decided by the judges, who customarily are chosen from among the university's photographers and graphic designers.
- First-place winners will be posted on the Pawprint website, and Cornell community members will select the people's choice for "People's Choice Best in Show." To ensure that only Cornell community members vote, votes must be cast from a computer with a Cornell IP address rather than from personal computers or other electronic devices.
- While the "People's Choice Best in Show" is underway, the judges will select the "Judges' Best in Show." If the two best-in-show photographs are different, both will receive prizes. If the same photograph receives both awards, the judges will pick a runner-up best in show.

Photograph guidelines:

- Photos must be submitted digitally by Sept. 22. The file name must include the photographer's Cornell NetID, category and name of photo in this format: njs3Animals.AViewFromAbove. Email to Aggie Binger, akm4@cornell.edu, with the subject line: 2017 Photo Contest. Entries will not be posted online until AFTER the deadline is past.
- Except for the special effects category, do not digitally enhance or alter photographs beyond the basics. Photos entered in previous years' contests are ineligible.
- Your submission gives Pawprint permission to produce the photo in hard copy and online to promote the contest. Pawprint is not responsible for any copyright violations.

To view last year's winners, see the [wrap-up article](#) from Nov. 15, 2016.

Reminder: Nominations accepted for three awards through June 30

Nominations are open through June 30 for the President’s Award for Innovation in Diversity and Inclusion, and the employee excellence awards for individuals and managers. Recipients will receive a monetary award, and all nominees will be invited to a luncheon with President Martha E. Pollack and Mary Opperman, vice president and chief human resources officer, in the fall.

Nomination criteria are broad and the process is brief – only 3 to 4 questions – and can be submitted without sharing the nominator’s name with the nominee. The awards committee would like to hear about what makes this person stand out: how the nominee is highly skilled in their work or area of expertise; respectful and supportive of colleagues or employees; looks for opportunities for growth personally and within their organization; or supports diversity or improved engagement and opportunities for diverse staff. Nominations are online for the following awards:

- [The President’s Award for Innovation in Diversity and Inclusion](#)
- [Individual Excellence Award](#)
- [Management Excellence Award](#)

An additional winner will also be chosen for the President’s “Far Above the Cayuga Waters” Award from the individual and management award nominees.

Visit the [Employee Excellence Awards website](#) for more details and to access the nomination forms.

Warrior-Scholar Project veterans are Cornell-ready

The Warrior-Scholar Project (WSP) helps veterans transition from a military to university environment by providing a highly structured orientation to academic life, with an emphasis on reading, writing and the liberal arts. The project will be offered at Cornell for the third year this summer, July 23-30.

The program, which originated at Yale University in 2012 and is now offered at 13 universities, has already helped the successful transition of two veterans to Cornell: Piragash Swargaloganathan ’19, finishing his first year at Cornell in the College of Human Ecology’s [Human Biology, Health and Society Program](#), and Luke Opyd ’18, studying for his B.S. in the School of Industrial and Labor Relations and now president of the Cornell Undergraduate Veterans Association (CUVA) and 2017 Cornell coordinator for WSP.

Swargaloganathan is a former U.S. Navy hospital corpsman who served at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland. He decided to pursue a medical career after leaving the military. To prepare for that transition, he participated in the 2015 WSP at Syracuse University.

There, he met Cornell graduate Craig Plunges ’04, who suggested that Cornell could be a good fit for him. “Initially I was not even dreaming about applying to an institution such as Cornell,” Swargaloganathan said. “But going to WSP gave me the courage to try.”

Cornell is giving Swargaloganathan a global health context for the work he wants to do in medical school, focusing on the role of science in society. “It has been a really wonderful experience,” he said. The opportunity to study abroad in Cambodia this past winter led him to minor in South Asian studies.

Swargaloganathan said it has been easy for him to connect with “traditional students” – those who attend college right after graduating from high school – but he was surprised by the large science classes. The military taught him to ask for help, so he connected with fellow students, sought out campus resources and reached out by email to his professors when needed, he said.

“Because of my military experiences, I don’t have a stake in social dynamics or expectations,” he said. “That allows me to set

my priorities right, spend my time as I should and make sound decisions to reach my goals.”

Opyd enlisted in the Navy in 2008 as an aviation electrician, serving in Japan for four years and then in San Diego, completing his military career as a petty officer second class. He is the recipient of several military medals and awards. While enlisted, he received an associate’s degree in accounting from Connecticut’s Post University.

To prepare for university life, Opyd participated in WSP at the University of Michigan. The program “was a good preview for me,” he said.

Opyd applied to the ILR School because it offered all his favorite subjects: economics, labor relations and law. While visiting Cornell, he met with David Outlaw ’17, then president of CUVA, who assured him he had made the right choice.

Opyd has had one focus at Cornell: work as hard as possible and leave with a degree in hand. But his involvement with CUVA gave him a broader purpose: “CUVA, and now also WSP, lets me help other veterans facing the same transitional challenges I have faced. In both programs, I can help improve the lives of others.”

As program coordinator of WSP at Cornell, Opyd talks with professors, writing coaches and others interested in working with veterans; sets up the week’s schedule of classes and activities; and serves as the first line of communication for this year’s 15 WSP students. “I want to make sure they know what to expect,” he said.

Opyd is also an undergraduate ambassador for Service to School, a national organization that gives consultation to veterans applying to college. Following graduation next year, he plans to attend law school.

Both Opyd and Swargaloganathan have been encouraged by the progress CUVA has made working with senior administrators, by the provost’s recent commitment to [increase undergraduate veteran enrollments](#) and by the creation of a veterans advocate position made possible through alumni support. They hope to build on CUVA’s efforts to increase the number of veterans in undergraduate programs, helping dispel some of the stereotypes they encounter and showing that veterans are a diverse group of people, coming from all walks of life and with differing military experiences.

They both agree that the WSP gives veterans a common educational experience with which to start their new careers. “The Warrior-Scholar Project serves as a catalyst for veterans succeeding in higher learning,” said Opyd. “Whether they have considerable academic experience or are starting their first class, veterans at WSP take away a multitude of critical skills and resources that will greatly assist them during their academic journey.”

For more information about the WSP, see the [national website](#).

Staff Development Day July 12

Save the Date! This year’s Staff Development Day will be held July 12, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., at the Physical Sciences Building.

The workshops and exhibits at Staff Development Day, offered at no cost, give Cornell employees opportunities to invest in their personal and professional growth and well-being. The day’s events will center on various aspects of education exploration, professional development, wellness and community in the workplace.

Last year’s workshops included topics such as "How to Get a Degree While Working," "Time-Saving Microsoft Outlook Tips, Tricks and Shortcuts," "The Art of Collaboration: Box Can Help!" and "How To Include More Wellness Activities During the Work Day."

The Resource Showcase will be held 9 a.m.-2 p.m. in the Physical Sciences Building, Clark Atrium. Workshops will be held in concurrent sessions throughout the day, from 9 a.m.-4 p.m.