

# EZRA

CORNELL  
UNIVERSITY'S  
MAGAZINE  
EXTRA

This special section, a bonus issue of the university's Ezra magazine, highlights ways Cornell initiatives intersect with philanthropy and engagement of Cornell alumni, parents and friends.

A black and white portrait of Fred Van Sickle, a middle-aged man with short, light-colored hair, wearing glasses, a dark suit jacket, a light-colored shirt, and a patterned tie. He is smiling and looking slightly to the right of the camera.

## AMID LEADERSHIP CHANGE, CORNELLIANS PROVIDE CONTINUITY

*Fred Van Sickle became vice president for alumni affairs and development in January 2016. He formerly served as chief development officer at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey, and executive vice president for university development and alumni relations at Columbia University. The full conversation is available at [www.news.cornell.edu/aad-vp-QA](http://www.news.cornell.edu/aad-vp-QA).*

### **What attracted you to Cornell?**

There were so many factors! More than almost any other great American higher education institution, Cornell can lay claim to real distinctiveness for all the reasons we know: the combination of the land-grant and Ivy League traditions and our presence in both an archetypal, largely rural, college town and America's great metropolis New York City.

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That distinctiveness, along with the opportunity to participate in a new chapter of university history with the conclusion of the successful “Cornell Now” campaign and new leadership was compelling. I was inspired by Cornell’s great team of volunteer, administrative and academic leaders, including the late Beth Garrett. These qualities and the chance to be in an environment where both undergraduate education and great research are honored and practiced by a superior faculty drew me in. Cornell is simply among the best of the best in our American higher education system that leads the world and drives our country’s success.

And if you will allow me one more reason, I was also drawn by the unique range of academic excellence at Cornell – from birds and veterinary medicine to technology and plant science. In my work, I learn new things every day. How lucky our students are!

**To what extent have you met with Cornellians since you started in January?**

I’ve been to some 160 gatherings, events and sit-down meetings with alumni, parents and friends throughout the country and in China. But with more than a quarter of a million Cornellians, I’ll never be able to meet enough of them!

**What strikes you as unique about Cornellians?**

They feel deeply connected to their university in a way that is rare and deeply affirming to those of us on campus. And why wouldn’t they feel that connection after the extraordinary academic and social experiences they share in a small, stunningly beautiful and sometimes cold city in central, upstate New York? At a place like Columbia, you can disappear into the city. But, here, it’s one big, shared experience.

Cornellians are proud, yet down-to-earth. As Midwesterners, my wife, Susan, and I feel very comfortable here. At the same time, Cornell is a place of the highest quality with enormous aspirations. It’s a powerful combination.

**You have worked in a number of universities and colleges. What has surprised or interested you since your arrival at Cornell?**

I did my graduate work in higher education and am an amateur student of institutions and cultures. I’m struck by the extent to which Cornellians still refer to the founders. Ezra Cornell’s and A.D. White’s vision and words can feel as fresh and relevant today as they did in 1865. I’ve worked in other great places, but none sustained by the ideas and work of two amazing people whom you call by name all the time and see in an eternal dialogue on the Arts Quad.

**Amid the university’s leadership transition, how can alumni, parents and friends play a role in helping to shape Cornell’s future?**

The experience of working with [interim president] Hunter Rawlings reminds me each day of the critical power of leadership and Cornell’s long tradition of presidential excellence. Each of us needs to play our role with the full confidence that Cornell will soon have another great, permanent leader. Alumni are the largest constituency, and along with faculty and long-term staff, have the longest association with the university. Maintaining that community and support through leadership changes and different chapters in the life of the university is an ingredient that keeps Cornell great.

**How are university relationships with alumni, parents and friends changing over time?**

We’re seeing generational shifts. Older generations have often been more institutionally minded and trusting that the president and trustees will be on the right course. Younger generations have different views on social and intellectual agendas and often want to know where they intersect with the university, rather than just being pure loyalists. We welcome partnerships of all kinds.

In addition, every valued nonprofit organization in America and abroad is now telling its story and seeking support. No great universi-



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**273,524**

**Number of living  
Cornell alumni  
(degreed)  
185,174  
undergraduate  
alumni  
88,350  
graduate alumni**

ty can be assured it will keep a lion's share of its community's hearts and minds. We're also in an immensely more competitive environment for people's time and investment. That's a big change.

**How does that guide Cornell's efforts to engage alumni, parents and friends?**

One of our key opportunities is to continually present Cornell's relevance and importance even to our own family. Cornell has an incredible and immediately recognizable brand. But I don't think the world fully appreciates Cornell, in part because you have to make an effort to come to Ithaca to see it and experience this vibrant place. That's one of the invaluable things about our growing New York City presence. The world can see more of what we're doing as we continue to make Ithaca shine. When you work at an encyclopedic university, it is a challenge to adequately communicate what's happening here in a way that engages rather than overwhelms. We work hard with our division and universitywide communications colleagues on this.

Communication, volunteer experiences, social media – these are some of the key areas where we continue to turn our attention. It's time to do another multiyear plan for our engagement efforts and reassess with our volunteers what's effective and where we might do things differently to enhance this great tradition of engaging alumni, parents and friends with Cornell.

**Universities undertake very large fundraising campaigns these days. Can you talk about the power of large gifts?**

Campaigns are big enterprises with big numbers because of the growth of universities and their aspirations to serve society. Excellence is expensive. Government resources and tuition revenues cannot grow enough to meet our needs in the way philanthropy has and can.

If you want to invest deeply and effectively in an area you really believe in, through an organization you know will be here 150 years from now, Cornell is the place. We have seen time and time again the ways in which Cornell philanthropists make possible the next big step forward – whether in a long-standing or new field or program that addresses urgent challenges or making a college education accessible, just to name a few examples.

**Do gifts of all sizes really make a difference?**

It means a tremendous amount for Cornell to have tangible support from a broad base, and that makes a real difference in our ability to garner support from other sources and in our national rankings. More than 175,000 people gave to the university throughout the campaign that concluded in December. We're

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Cliff Roles Photography

as proud of that number as we are of the fact we raised \$6.3 billion. Any organization with that many people rooting for it is doing something very special.

Gifts of all sizes add up, making a collective impact on our ability to provide scholarships, fellowships and any number of program activities across our university. By giving to Cornell, you can invest in long-term solutions to the most important challenges of our time as well as in the individuals – students and faculty – who will lead the way forward.

**What particular things do you want to accomplish in the next year?**

I want to help advance an effort that President Rawlings, Provost Mike Kotlikoff and the trustees are developing to generate more support for the Cornell faculty, specifically for faculty hires and faculty retention. While Cornell is wealthy, it does not have the resources to compete with some of the other institutions with whom we go "toe to toe" for faculty talent. We need to do all we can to be sure that our academic leaders can attract and keep the best professorial research and teaching talent in Ithaca for the benefit of our students and our research agenda. While faculty renewal efforts began quite a few years ago, and we've made notable progress, we're accelerating this effort.



Robert Barker, University Communications

**Top:** Fred Van Sickle, vice president for alumni affairs and development, center, with Interim President Hunter Rawlings, left, and Daniel Huttenlocher, vice provost and dean of Cornell Tech, at the Cornell Tech campus site on Roosevelt Island in New York City in May.

**Above:** Van Sickle, right, visited with alumni members of the Cornell Club of Sarasota-Manatee in Florida, including, from left, Thomas Newman '70; Jean Emery, M.A. '54, retired former director, Cornell University Metro New York Regional Office; and Robert Cutler, B.M.E. '62.

**Opposite page:** Van Sickle chats with division staff.

# 64

the number of courses in the humanities and social sciences being offered to working adults in NYC communities by the Brooklyn Institute for Social Research, a nonprofit founded by Ajay Chaudhary '03; fellow alum Danya Glabau '07, M.A. '14, Ph.D. '16, also is teaching there.



Michael Maddox, Cadet Command Public Affairs

## Cornell ROTC grads honored by Army

Two Cornell alumni have been inducted into the U.S. Army ROTC National Hall of Fame.

As the Army ROTC program marked its 100th anniversary this year, Matt Urban '41 and Harris Rosen '61 were among 326 ROTC graduates in the inaugural class of the Army Cadet Command's Hall of Fame, located at Fort Knox, Kentucky. Inductees, who were awarded the honor in a June ceremony, were nominated by the academic institutions that partner with Army ROTC and chosen for their outstanding military careers, achievements in life and public service.

Above: A member of the Army's Golden Knights jumps into Brooks Field at Fort Knox to kick off the Reserve Officers' Training Corps Centennial Celebration Ceremony June 10.

**"The smiles, hugs, laughs, shrieks of joy and so many other wonderful things that happen when friends who haven't seen each other for a while reconnect in person are absolutely priceless."**

– Jeff Weintraub '91, M.D. '95, Reunion chair for his class, on the joys experienced by Reunion leaders

## STAY INVOLVED



### HOMECOMING

Come back home and join the Big Red celebration! Homecoming features fireworks, football, family fun and more.



### ZINCK'S NIGHT

Oct. 20 is the International Spirit of Zinck's Night! Find a celebration near you.



### MY BIG RED YEAR

Stay connected to Cornell all year long with this calendar of highlighted events.

**Learn more at [alumni.cornell.edu/cam](http://alumni.cornell.edu/cam)**

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