

# From the Hill

## Cornellians Support Battle Against Racism



**NATIONAL MOVEMENT:** Protesters marched from campus to downtown Ithaca in early June, demanding racial justice and decrying police brutality.

As the Black Lives Matter movement gained strength across the nation and the world, Cornellians took part in demonstrations on campus and beyond. In one of numerous local protests over the course of several weeks, about 1,000 people marched from Ho Plaza to the Ithaca Police Department downtown in early June, decrying police killings of African Americans and calling for changes to make the nation's criminal justice system more fair and equitable. The event was a joint effort by community groups and campus organizations including several Greek houses, the Nigerian Students Association, and Black Students United. "The extraordinary times in which we are living are shining a spotlight on so many issues of equity, and the lack of it: on the ways that rights and opportunity are unevenly distributed across our society, and the worth of our labor and our lives unequally valued," President Martha Pollack said in a message to the University. "As an academic community built on the bedrock values of diversity, inclusion, and openness, we have an obligation to ensure that the forces of these events and our feelings drive us not backward, but forward."

Pollack went on to describe a series of initiatives to address issues related to diversity and inclusion. They include stepping up the efforts of the committee that advises the Cornell Police on

public safety and victim advocacy; holding a summit with local and regional law enforcement agencies; scheduling a series of Zoom sessions to discuss such topics as institutional racism and ways to be allies to Black colleagues; and organizing a University-wide reading of the book *How to Be an Antiracist*, including virtual discussions over the summer. "As a community," Pollack said, "we can and must act, through our teaching, our research, and our engagement, to stand up for those who are oppressed or marginalized, to educate ourselves and others, and to work to ensure that we—our entire society—do better." She later designated June 19—"Juneteenth," or Emancipation Day—as a holiday for the Ithaca and Cornell Tech campuses, deeming it a "day of reflection"; Dean Augustine Choi did the same at the Medical College.

Also in June, two student petitions circulated demanding a variety of actions by the University, including creating a student-led alternative justice board and an anti-racism institute. Through a GoFundMe campaign, a new organization called Cornell Students for Black Lives—a coalition of some 185 campus groups—raised over \$115,000 to support its stated goal of "utilizing its networks to amplify the Black voices on campus in promoting activism and education to combat both explicit and implicit racism."

## Students to Return to the Hill This Fall

In late June, President Pollack announced the University's plans for fall semester. As she outlined in an e-mail to the Cornell community, most students will return and in-person instruction will resume—though, she said, “it will be different from any semester we’ve experienced before.” (The plans apply to the Ithaca and Geneva campuses; Cornell Tech’s fall will be all online, while the Medical College’s will be a mix of remote and in-person teaching.)

Pollack noted that while a residential semester has inherent risks, epidemiological studies indicate that they may in fact be lower than with an all-online arrangement, given that surveys show that many students plan to return to Ithaca either way and would otherwise not be governed by the strictures that Cornell will put in place. They include mandatory COVID tests; dining hall service combining take-out and eat-in meals (the latter by reservation only); and on-campus residential rules limiting the number of students sharing rooms and bathrooms. All students—whether living in University housing or local rentals—will be required to sign a pledge to follow guidelines regarding face masks, physical distancing, social gatherings, daily health check-ins, and more.

In classrooms, all students will be required to wear face masks and sit in assigned seats; faculty will have to wear masks or face shields. International students unable to travel due to COVID restrictions can study remotely and may have the option of a residential campus experience in their home regions through partnerships Cornell is establishing with other schools.

The fall move-in process will happen over an extended period, to allow for COVID testing and the quarantine of arriving students. In-person instruction is set to begin September 2

**The fall, Pollack says, ‘will be different from any semester we’ve experienced before.’**



**CAMPUS AWAITS:** The Arts Quad in June

and continue until Thanksgiving break, when students will return home and complete the semester online, including exams. Spring semester will begin on February 9 and is aimed to be fully residential, though Pollack stressed that those and all other plans are subject to change according to the conditions of the pandemic.

This year’s Homecoming will be virtual (“StayHomecoming”), and there will be no winter Commencement; December graduates can participate in Commencement 2021—set, as usual, for Memorial Day weekend. The delayed 2020 Commencement will be held during a special 5th Reunion, June 3–6, hosted by the classes of ‘15 and ‘16. As Pollack wrote: “The year ahead will be different, it will be difficult, but it will, I believe, still be a year to treasure—a year of exploration and discovery, a year of friendship, and of growth.”

## For 2020 Grads, a Virtual Salute

While a traditional Commencement for members of the Ithaca campus’s Class of 2020 has been postponed to next summer, their degrees were conferred on Memorial Day weekend, when the ceremony was originally scheduled. The class received a host of virtual kudos from faculty, administrators, family, and friends on Twitter and Instagram, with dozens of posts bearing the hashtag #Cornell2020. In lieu of the traditional Commencement address, President Pollack offered a video message on behalf of the University’s academic leadership. “Throughout the unprecedented events of these past months, as our community’s lives and expectations have been upended, reshaped, and upended again, our hearts have been most of all with you: our graduating seniors,” she said.

As usual, the graduates—about 6,000 in total, including some 3,300 earning bachelor’s degrees—will receive physical diplomas in the mail. But this year, for the first time, they’ll also get an e-mailed version. “Since the day you arrived at Cornell, all of you expected to end your time on campus the way generations of Cornellians have: celebrating Commencement in Ithaca, with caps and gowns, families and friends,” Pollack said. “That is what all of you deserve, and it is exactly what we will do, as soon as we responsibly can. And I can’t wait to celebrate with you: a class that will always have its own place in the history of Cornell.”



**CAPS AND GOWNS:** In May, Cornellians celebrated a virtual Commencement on social media. Revelers included (clockwise from top left) Fabrice Ulysse ’20; Aaron Chiou, PhD ’20 (who crocheted his own mini-avatar and took photos around campus); Stephanie Smart ’20 (with her dad, horticulture professor Larry Smart ’87, and a clock tower cake); and Jordan Landsman ’20.





**‘WONDER’ WOMEN:** More than two dozen alumnae who are current leaders in STEM and related fields are featured in a new book from the Cornell student chapter of the Society of Women Engineers. Entitled *Wall of Wonder*, the book—penned by Madeline Dubelier ’20, Catherine Gurecky ’20, and Abigail Macaluso ’20—includes profiles of each subject, along with illustrated portraits by David Ross Jansen ’22. Says Gurecky: “The book covers everything from a fashion designer and a meteorologist all the way to more traditional engineers.”

## Did You Know . . .



That the Cornell Dairy is now shipping ice cream via overnight FedEx? For details, go to foodscience.cals.cornell.edu.

## Endowment to Eschew Fossil Fuels

In May, the Board of Trustees approved a moratorium on new private investments in fossil fuel sectors, along with a decision to grow those in alternative energy technologies. The move had been recommended by the board’s Investment Committee after a review of the University’s \$6.9 billion endowment portfolio and analysis of the financial outlook for the coal, oil, and gas industries, including the threat posed by climate change. “There’s a growing recognition that we’re transitioning away from fossil fuels globally, and the economic competitiveness of renewable energy sources is rising,” says Ken Miranda, the University’s chief investment officer. “We’re doing the right thing from an investment perspective, particularly for an endowment with a perpetual time horizon.”

## ‘Minecraft is a fantastic medium to learn and demonstrate knowledge about ancient civilizations and architecture.’

— Engineering major Aliyah Geer ’21, who built a Mesopotamian city in the video game for a Near Eastern studies class

## Give My Regards to . . . These Ithacans in the news



L.A. Times reporter and former CAM intern **Molly O'Toole '09** (left), who shared the first-ever Pulitzer Prize for audio reporting for her work on a “This American Life” series on asylum seekers.

Computer science professor **Éva Tardos** (right), elected to the American Philosophical Society, the U.S.’s oldest learned society.



Government professor **Peter Katzenstein** (below left), winner of the Johan Skytte Prize (considered the Nobel of political science) for contributions to the field including “furthering the understanding of how history, culture, and norms shape economies.”



**Nick Diaco '21** and **Anna Poslednik '21**, winners of Goldwater Scholarships.

Professors **G. Peter Lepage** (physics) and **Thomas Pepinsky** (government), awarded Tisch Distinguished Professorships, among Cornell’s highest faculty honors.

**Kay WalkingStick**, professor emerita of art and an internationally known Cherokee artist, elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

**Lorin Warnick, PhD '94** (right), appointed to a second five-year term as dean of the Vet college.





## RIP, Ruloff's

Ruloff's, the College Avenue staple that opened and closed several times over the decades, is gone for good. The restaurant shuttered in March due to the COVID-19 pandemic, never to reopen for a last hurrah: the building that housed it was demolished in June, and its interior fixtures—including its iconic bar—were put up for sale. Happily, its neighbor Collegetown Bagels (which stopped operating at its familiar corner location in late May due to the planned demolition) is only gone temporarily. It's slated to reopen in August in a new, larger storefront in the historic Sheldon Court building right across the street.

## R + D



### New "smart parking" software

developed by systems engineering professor H. Oliver Gao matches drivers with garage spots based on such factors as cost and walking distance to the final destination. It could reduce congestion and emissions while saving time.

**Food science professor** Syed Rizvi and Michael Wagner '09, PhD '15, have received a patent on a method for making instant ice cream using pressurized carbon dioxide.

**Analyzing how biological structures** like insect wings and plant leaves repel heavy raindrops, CALS researchers have shown that microscale bumps and a nanoscale layer of wax offer a protective surface.



**A startup founded** by MBA student Gabe Trumbo that aims to establish lounges at midsize airports won the \$25,000 first prize in the annual Cornell Hospitality Business Plan Competition in April.



**Birding's annual Global Big Day**, organized by the Lab of Ornithology, set a world record in May with 2.1 million observations; some 50,000 participants recorded 6,479 species.

## New Deans Named

*Cornell recently announced the appointment of four new deans:*



Lynden Archer (left), the James A. Friend Family Distinguished Professor in Engineering, has been named dean of the Engineering college. On the faculty since 2000, Archer is the former director of the School of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering; since fall 2017, he has been director of the Cornell Energy Systems Institute, a position he will keep until a successor is hired.

Kavita Bala (right), chair of computer science and an expert in computer graphics and computer vision, will serve as dean of the Faculty of Computing and Information Science. Provost Michael Kotlikoff calls her "a researcher whose innovative work crosses disciplines and frequently bridges the divide between academia and industry."



In a position that has been expanded to include the post of vice provost for graduate education, Kathryn Boor '80 (left) will be dean of the Graduate School. CALS dean since 2010, Boor is a professor of food science (her undergrad major) who joined the faculty in 1994; she chaired the department from 2007–10. Her term will begin when her successor at CALS is hired.

After two years as interim dean of Human Ecology, Rachel Dunifon (right) has been formally named to the position. She came to the Hill in 2001 as a professor of policy analysis and management, specializing in child and family policy. Kotlikoff praised her "outstanding, forward-thinking leadership" during her time as interim dean, which included a recent review of the social sciences at Cornell.



## On-Campus Research Resumes

In late May, the University got the go-ahead from New York State to begin reopening its Upstate research facilities in what Provost Kotlikoff described as a "staged, limited manner." Most research had been suspended since March 15, with only essential work related to COVID-19 allowed to continue. In order to reopen, facilities have to meet a strict set of requirements including making personal protective equipment available and having employees complete COVID-19 safety training. The guidelines also call for workers to undergo mandatory daily health screenings and to practice social distancing on the job. As University officials note, as operations gradually restart, the need for distancing may mean changes in how people collaborate. "I believe we really need to rethink everything that we do in the lab," says Emmanuel Giannelis, vice provost for research.