

In-Person Spring Proceeds



CAMPUS LIFE (clockwise from top left): Picking up food at Robert Purcell Community Center; studying in the Human Ecology Commons; stopping by a table offering masks and information during move-in; building a snowman on the Arts Quad

After a successful fall semester, the University reconvened for spring—albeit slightly later than usual, with classes resuming in February. Just before instruction began, the campus's COVID-19 alert level was shifted up to yellow (“low to moderate risk”) after the University identified a cluster of positive cases related to a Collegetown party; it returned to green (“new normal”) two and a half weeks later. “The stakes for ourselves and for our in-person semester are real,” President Martha Pollack and Provost Michael Kotlikoff wrote in early February. “We have already proven that we have the ability to keep the virus in check on our campus, but that only remains possible through our collective actions.”

The University’s operational plan for spring is modeled on the fall, with some tweaks due to changing circumstances. While vaccines have begun to roll out nationwide, the majority of Cornell’s population won’t be eligible for months—and in the meantime, a more transmissible variant of the virus has reached Tompkins County. “The success we had in the fall was—in large part—because we weren’t static,” Gary Koretzky ’78, vice provost for academic integration, said in late January. “While many of the messages are the same this semester—wear a mask, maintain your distance from others, avoid crowds—it is important to recognize that we’re in a very different place, facing more aggressive, widespread COVID-19 infection rates coupled with the fatigue that

comes from a prolonged public health crisis. There are things we will be doing differently in the spring because of this new reality.”

A key objective for spring is for the Vet college’s COVID-19 Testing Lab to process samples even faster than it did before: within twelve to eighteen hours as opposed to twenty-four. The University has also stepped up testing frequency, with some students being screened three times a week—a move aimed at curbing spread in groups such as varsity athletes and residents of Greek houses or co-ops. Another change calls for all students to take one of their COVID tests on a Friday, Saturday, or Sunday, in part to discourage non-essential travel over the weekend. Says Ryan Lombardi, vice president for student and campus life: “We saw a lot of our positive cases in the fall linked to students who had left the Ithaca area and brought the virus back with them.”

Cornell has applied for state approval to be a vaccine distributor and begun to plan an on-campus clinic where shots could be administered to eligible members of the Big Red community—easing the burden on the local hospital system and health department. The University has also instituted a new pandemic response volunteer program for employees; participants will work with human resources and Cornell’s COVID-19 Response Team to identify risks for workplace transmission and will provide additional contact tracing if a staff member tests positive.



Reunion 2021 to Be Virtual

As in 2020, this year's Reunion will be held virtually due to public health concerns related to the pandemic. "While this news may not come as a surprise, it comes with sadness and disappointment for all of us," Michelle Vaeth '98, associate vice president for alumni affairs, wrote in mid-February. "We know that a virtual Reunion is not an equal substitute for our alumni hoping to return to our beautiful campus and celebrate with their Cornell family." Vaeth also announced that although the University had hoped to hold a traditional Commencement for the Class of 2020 in June, those graduates would instead be recognized during virtual Reunion.

Like last year's festivities (seen above in an image of participants Zooming in wearing Big Red colors), Reunion 2021—set for June 11 and 12—will be open to all Cornellians regardless of graduating class. According to Alumni Affairs, more than 10,000 households participated in 2020, with content viewed by alumni on six continents and in seventy-seven countries. "Reunion is about togetherness—not only for four days in June but through community building over decades," says Reunion director Kate Freyer. "If there are silver linings to hosting Reunion 2021 virtually, the biggest is that we are strengthening the fabric of these connections by reaching many more alumni, family, and friends than we ever could during an in-person Reunion. It's a connection that has helped sustain us over the recent difficult months when so much has been different. Reunion in any form is really about coming home, wherever you are."

'You can be a very intelligent, educated person and still have no idea how any of this law stuff works.'

— **Craig Newton, JD '07**,
co-director of the Law School's Legal Information Institute,
which educates the public via an open access website

THE CHAMP



Psychology professor Vivian Zayas '94 (left) was recently inducted into which sport's hall of fame?

- | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| a) Miniature golf | c) Ultimate Frisbee |
| b) Touch football | d) Cricket |

[ANSWER: C]

R + D

Researchers at Cornell and Columbia have developed a nasal spray that blocks the spread of COVID-19 among ferrets (right)—and are hopeful it could have the same effect on humans.



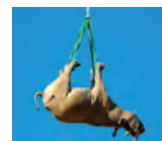
In research that could inform artificial intelligence, computer science professor Jon Kleinberg '93 and colleagues have developed a chess program trained to play like a human.



The Cherry Ember tomato (left), a new variety from Cornell AgriTech, offers improved yield and longer shelf life compared to most cherry tomatoes, with meatier flesh and more crack-resistant skin.

Using data gathered at the NSF's Atacama Cosmology Telescope, astronomers from Cornell and elsewhere who are studying the universe's oldest light estimate that the universe is 13.77 billion years old—give or take 40 million years.

While Vet college researchers admit that it may sound comical, their study in Namibia of the best way to transport endangered black rhinoceroses while tranquilized found that hanging them upside down by their feet (right) was most effective at reducing the dangers of anesthesia.



Ivies Cancel Spring Games

Ending hopes for Ivy sports during the 2020–21 academic year, in mid-February the league announced that it would not hold any competitions or host championships this spring due to the pandemic. "While acknowledging that the current public health environment is not compatible with a traditional Ivy League season," Martha Pollack and her fellow Ivy presidents said, "the Council has also put in place a process that may allow for limited, local competition during the spring if public health conditions improve sufficiently to allow greater levels of in-person activity at Ivy League campuses." In a separate statement that followed up on the possibility of local contests, Cornell athletics director Andy Noel said that his program "will do everything in our power to make that a reality."

New Director for Lab of O



An evolutionary biologist at the Smithsonian's Museum of Natural History has been named the next executive director of the Lab of Ornithology. Ian Owens (left) will assume leadership of the lab July 1; he'll also be a professor of ecology and evolutionary biology in CALS. Originally from Yorkshire, England, he has previously served

as director of the Natural History Museum in London; he's currently a deputy director at the Smithsonian. CALS dean Benjamin Houlton praises Owens for his "incredible wealth of knowledge about birds, passion for connecting the public to scientific discoveries, and leadership in environmental big data." Owens succeeds John Fitzpatrick, who has headed the lab since 1995.



LITTLE LAMB: In a photo that got more than 5,300 likes on Cornell's Instagram, CALS student RaeAnne Carpenter '22 tends to a particularly adorable study subject from Animal Science 3800: Sheep—a class whose participants take turns caring for lambs and ewes four times a day.

Name Change for English Department

The Board of Trustees has approved changing the name of the Department of English to the Department of Literatures in English—a switch that faculty members say better reflects the department's diverse fields of study. "We seek to make it clear to students and the broad public that we study writers from Africa, South Asia, the Caribbean, and the U.S., and that we value these as central to any canon of great literary works in English," says department chair Caroline Levine. A group of twenty-five faculty proposed the change last summer amid renewed attention to structural racism.

'Conformity is a really strong social force.'

— ILR professor and social influence researcher **Vanessa Bohns**, who says that sharing news of your COVID vaccination can encourage others to follow suit

CU Aids NY Public Health Corps

Cornell will play a role in developing and training the nation's first state public health corps, which will support COVID-19 vaccine distribution and outreach and is aimed at improving long-term public health. Drawing on expertise from the Vet college's master of public health program as well as eCornell's experience in remote learning, the University is developing a series of online courses to train at least 1,000 fellows for the New York State Public Health Corps. Cornell will also work with the governor's office to develop a citizen training program designed to help New Yorkers volunteer during future public health emergencies.

Did You Know . . .

That Cornell has a new lab devoted to the role of gender in the security forces? Run by government professor Sabrina Karim, it will take a social scientific approach to studying the issue in the military, police, and more.



Campus Ash Trees Culled

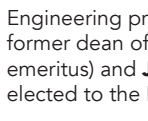
The University is in the process of removing more than 1,700 of its ash trees infested by the devastating emerald ash borer beetle. The removals are part of Cornell's action plan to manage thousands of trees on and off campus that have succumbed to the invasive Asian species, which has reached every state in the U.S. and was detected in Tompkins County in 2018. The beetle's larvae feed on the inner bark, disrupting water and nutrient flow, and can kill a tree in three to four years. "This is a safety issue with trees that are dying or near death and will eventually fall, so we are going to need to take them down in order to limit concerns about public safety and property damage," says Todd Bittner, director of natural areas for Cornell Botanic Gardens. As part of the action plan, University staff treated 172 high-value trees—including those on the Arts, Ag, and Engineering quads—with pesticides, an expensive protocol that must be repeated every two to three years. Cornell arborists will also be surveying for trees that survive ash borer outbreaks in the hope of breeding resistant varieties.

Give My Regards to . . . These Cornellians in the news



Anthony Fauci, MD '66 (left), director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, winner of Israel's \$1 million Dan David Prize for his work combatting the novel coronavirus and other threats to human health.

"Apple Commons"—a flavor combining apples, cinnamon, maple, and graham cracker chunks that's meant to evoke pie à la mode—winner of food science's annual student ice cream design competition.



Jessica Crolick Rolph '97, MBA '04 (left), co-founder and CEO of the early childhood development startup Lovevery, named Cornell's 2021 Entrepreneur of the Year.

Ilayda Samilgil '19 and **Rob Shepherd**, associate professor of mechanical engineering, who won the \$50,000 grand prize in an NFL innovation competition for a stretchable sensor that uses light to measure muscle fatigue.



Engineering professors **Lance Collins** (right, former dean of the college, now a professor emeritus) and **Jefferson Tester '66, MS '67**, elected to the National Academy of Engineering.