

From the Hill

After a Successful Fall, Cornell Looks to Spring



GREAT OUTDOORS:
In a taste of normalcy, warm autumn days allowed some in-person classes to meet outside, albeit with masks and social distancing.

The University's efforts to offer in-person learning last fall worked out according to plan: the campus's COVID alert level never rose above yellow (denoting "low to moderate risk"), and the residential portion of the semester continued until Thanksgiving break as expected. As in-person instruction was winding up in mid-November, President Martha Pollack announced preliminary plans for spring 2021. "While many of us had hoped that the upcoming spring semester might offer a return to more familiar academic routines, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to pose a serious threat nationally and globally," she said. "If one thing is clear, it is that we can expect more unpredictability ahead, requiring us to draw upon the same flexibility and shared sense of responsibility that have served our campuses well this fall."

As Pollack explained, as in the fall, spring will have a variety of teaching methods: in person, online, and hybrid. "In welcoming

students back to campus for the spring semester, we anticipate that most rules and guidelines from this fall will remain in place," she said. "This includes wearing a face covering, maintaining physical distance, limiting in-person gatherings, and complying with all Daily Check health assessment and surveillance testing requirements." Spring classes on the Ithaca and Cornell Tech campuses will run from February 8 to May 25; in lieu of a traditional spring break, two "wellness breaks" lasting two days each will be offered. "Students planning to return to the Ithaca area this spring should be prepared to remain here for the duration of the semester," Pollack stressed, "with limited-to-no personal travel outside of the greater Ithaca area." The prospect for holding an in-person Commencement for the Class of 2021 in May remains unclear, she said, with an update expected early this year.

Alum Honored with 'Feeney Way'



East Avenue, one of the campus's main thoroughfares, is being renamed Feeney Way after the University's most generous donor. The founding chairman of Atlantic Philanthropies and a pioneer in the duty-free shopping industry, Charles Feeney '56 (left) gifted nearly \$1 billion to Cornell

over the course of four decades. Most of those donations were anonymous; it wasn't until the late Nineties that Feeney's largesse was revealed. "Cornell's culture of affording any person an opportunity for study in any area of interest informed my commitment to 'give while living'—to use wealth to create opportunities for others, especially for those who have not historically had those opportunities," says Feeney, a Hotelier whose entrepreneurial career began with selling sandwiches on campus as an undergrad.

Ivies Cancel Winter Sports

Dashing hopes for Big Red players and fans, the Ivy League has announced that in light of the COVID pandemic, there will be no intercollegiate competition for the 2020–21 winter season. Spring sports are postponed through at least the end of February—and while the league had previously floated the possibility of rescheduling last fall's contests to spring semester, that's no longer on the table. In a statement from the Ivy League Council of Presidents, Martha Pollack and colleagues said the unanimous decisions "follow extended consideration of options and strategies to mitigate the transmission of the COVID-19 virus, an analysis of current increasing rates of COVID-19—locally, regionally, and nationally—and the resulting need to continue the campus policies related to travel, group size, and visitors to campus that safeguard the campus and community."

PHOTOS: THIS PAGE, CLASS; JASON KOSKI/UREL; OPPOSITE PAGE, TIGER; VLADIMIR WRANGEL; TEF; NATRISHINE; SPIDER; REPTILES 4-ALL (ALL ALUM); FEENAY, ROBERT BARKER/UREL; FEENAY, ROBERT BARKER/UREL; COLLEGETOWN, TWILA; STUDY, KOSKI

R + D



Vaccinating endangered Siberian tigers (left) is the only practical strategy to protect them from the deadly canine distemper virus (CDV). According to Cornell vet Martin Gilbert, immunizing just two tigers in a small population each year can reduce by almost 75 percent the risk of species extinction due to CDV.

Researchers at the medical college and on the Ithaca campus are gleaming insights into COVID and its treatment, thanks to a data registry they developed of more than 4,000 patients who had symptoms and were seen at NewYork-Presbyterian.

Big Red food scientists report that teff (right)—a staple grain in East Africa that's little known in the U.S.—has strong dietary benefits, including enhancing the nutritional value of iron and zinc.



By improving air quality, a federal program to reduce ozone pollution may have saved 1.5 billion birds over the past forty years, investigators at Cornell and the University of Oregon report.



How do ogre-faced spiders (left) detect prey insects flying behind them? As neurobiology and behavior postdoc Jay Stafstrom discovered, sensors on their legs can detect sounds from up to six feet away.

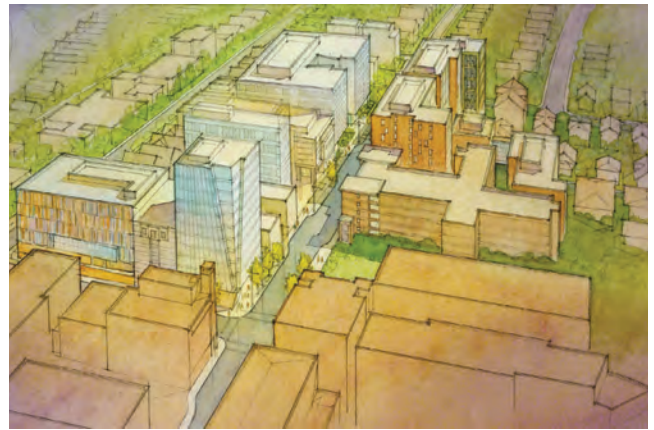
Goldwin Smith Profs Renamed

While Goldwin Smith was an eminent academic, his legacy is fraught: he wrote numerous essays espousing bigoted views on women and Jewish people and opposing suffrage and coeducation. As Vice President for University Relations Joel Malina puts it, such beliefs “are antithetical to the inclusive community and lived values Cornell is rightfully proud of, and continually strives for, today.” Therefore, trustees have accepted a task force’s recommendation to rename the Goldwin Smith Professorships. The task force also considered whether to do the same for Smith’s eponymous hall—but, Malina said, “de-naming at this time was determined to be too simple an action versus engaging seriously with the full legacy of Goldwin Smith.” Potential alternatives include installing an interpretive display in the building.

Law Dean to Lead Seattle University



In advance of assuming the presidency of Seattle University this summer, Eduardo Peñalver '94 (left) has stepped down as dean of Cornell Law School, though he'll remain on the faculty through spring semester. Dean since 2014, Peñalver was the first Latino to lead an Ivy League law school; he'll be the first layperson and the first person of color to become president of Seattle University, a 130-year-old Jesuit institution.



Major Collegetown Project Unveiled

Plans for a massive, multi-building, mixed-use development in the heart of Collegetown (seen in a rendering above) were filed with the City of Ithaca last fall and have begun to go through what will likely be a complex and contentious approval process. The 152-page application to build the so-called Collegetown Innovation District outlines plans to “redevelop multiple parcels on Dryden Road, College Avenue, Catherine Street, Cook Street, and Linden Avenue”—an aim made possible by the purchase of numerous properties in recent years, including the Nines and several apartment buildings. The proposed \$145 million project—which could break ground as soon as this fall—would comprise at least 720,000 square feet, boasting 440 apartments as well as commercial and retail space. As part of their pitch for approval, the developers are offering to contribute \$3 million to the city, including \$1 million for Ithaca’s affordable housing agency and \$1 million to relocate and restore the original Fire Station Number 9, which would become a community facility.

‘I really wanted to move the needle within an environment I could influence.’

— **Jehron Petty '20**, founder of a digital community for Black, Latinx, and Native American students in computer science



STUDY SPOTS: With the aim of providing safe indoor spaces during the pandemic, last fall sixteen temporary cubicles—crafted from PVC pipe and plastic sheeting—were built in the Human Ecology Building.



BUNNY LOVE: A Holland lop rabbit named Finn has gained Instagram fame on East Hill and beyond. Animal science major Erin Scannell '21 and Finn have racked up more than 5,000 followers (including the University's official Insta account) to @bigredbun over the past two years. Finn is an emotional support animal for Scannell, who has shared hundreds of photos of the critter on campus and worked to raise awareness of depression, anxiety, and other mental illnesses.

'In just a few hours, we've converted an online match into a real-world date.'

— **Abhimanyu Goyal '22**, who won a CU pitch competition for Weet, a dating app that arranges first meetings at restaurants

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



Professors **John Abowd** (statistics), **Susan Daniel** (engineering), **John Fitzpatrick** (ornithology, left), **Natalie Mahowald** (engineering), and **Jeremy Searle** (evolutionary biology), elected fellows of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Augustine Choi (right), dean of Weill Cornell Medicine and provost for medical affairs at Cornell, elected to the National Academy of Medicine, one of the field's highest honors.



Katherine Clark, JD '89 (Massachusetts), **Sharice Davids, JD '10** (Kansas, left), **Dan Meuser '88** (Pennsylvania), **Kurt Schrader '73** (Oregon), **Elissa Slotkin '98** (Michigan), and **Beth Van Duyne '95** (Texas), who won election to the 117th U.S. Congress. All but Van Duyne are incumbents.

Did You Know . . .

There's a YouTube channel where CU faculty read their poetry and fiction? Featuring work by Helena María Viramontes, Lyrae Van Clief-Stefanon (right), J. Robert Lennon, Robert Morgan, and more, it can be found by searching the site for "Cornell English department."



Former CU-Led Observatory Closes



In what astronomy professor Jonathan Lunine calls "an inestimable loss," the radio telescope at Puerto Rico's Arecibo Observatory (left) is no more. Last fall, the facility's 900-ton instrument platform

collapsed; that followed the failure of two support cables that had damaged the telescope's 1,000-foot-wide dish, prompting the NSF to announce that it would decommission it. In its heyday, Arecibo was the world's largest radio telescope, used to study pulsars, galaxies, and more. It was conceived by Cornell faculty and built in the early Sixties in an area whose topography forms a natural bowl. Cornell managed the facility—also a location for the movies *Contact* and *GoldenEye*—from its inception until 2011.

Novelist Alison Lurie Dies at 94

Cornell is mourning the passing of one of its most beloved faculty authors: Alison Lurie (right), a professor emerita of English who died December 3 at age ninety-four. Lurie's eleven novels—some of which were set in a college town resembling Ithaca, and at a university not unlike Cornell—include *Foreign Affairs*, which won the 1985 Pulitzer Prize and was nominated for a National Book



Award. Among her other well-known works is 1974's *The War Between the Tates*, about a faculty wife who discovers that her husband is having an affair with a student. (Both novels were made into TV movies.) Lurie joined Cornell's English faculty in 1969 and became just the second woman awarded tenure in the department; she retired in 2005. In addition to her novels, she published nonfiction books, criticism, short stories, and more. In an obituary, the *New York Times* dubbed Lurie a "tart-voiced novelist of manners," observing that her work "punctured pretension, deflated dogma, and illuminated the staggering talent of smart people for self-deception."

PHOTOS: BUNNY, ERIN SCANNELL; FITZPATRICK, KOSKI; CHOI AND VAN CLIEF-STEFANON, BARKER; DAVIDS, SHARICE/CONGRESS/FLOKOR; ARECIBO, PHOTOSPIRIT/ALAMY; LURIE, AGENCE OPALE/ALAMY