



Cornell University

David J. Skorton
President

PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT ON AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AND DIVERSITY IN EMPLOYMENT

August 2008

If even one [student of color] offered himself and passed the examinations, we should receive him even if all of our five hundred students were to ask for dismissal on that account.

—Andrew D. White, Cornell's first president, in an 1874 letter

The bold vision of Cornell's founders—that an institution of higher education should be a diverse academic community providing leadership and service to the state, the nation, and the world—continues to guide our university today. Over the years, Cornell has remained steadfast in its commitment to take affirmative steps in employment practices and in student admissions in order to create a diverse and inclusive work and educational environment.

A Welcoming and Inclusive Place to Work and Study

Cornell's diversity efforts in employment have received widespread recognition.

- One of the top 50 employers for workers over 50 (American Association of Retired Persons, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008)
- One of the top 100 adoption-friendly workplaces (Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, 2007 and 2008)
- Honorable mention, top military-friendly employers (GI Jobs, 2005)
- Recognition for programs for individuals with disabilities (New York State Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities, 2004 and 2006)
- One of the best places for postdocs to work (*Scientist* magazine, 2006)
- One of only three universities cited as "Best Places to Work in IT" (*Computerworld* magazine, 2007, 2008)
- One of only five organizations to receive an Equal Employment Opportunity Award from the U.S. Department of Labor (Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs, 2007)
- One of the 100 best companies for working mothers (*Working Mother* magazine, 2006, 2007, 2008)
- One of the 50 best companies for prospective parents (*Conceive* magazine, 2008)
- One of the top nonprofit employers for women executives (National Association for Female Executives, 2008)

Cornell has also been recognized as one of the best campuses for African-American students (by *Black Enterprise* magazine) and as one of the best campuses for LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) students by *College Advocate Guide*.

Recruiting and Retention Strategies

As part of Cornell's intention to be an eminently supportive and rewarding place to work, the university provides services that benefit all employees as well as strategies specifically aimed at recruiting and retaining members of underrepresented groups.

One of the most recent developments in this area is the new child care center opening in August 2008 on Pleasant Grove Road. The new facility has space for 158 children of staff, faculty, and students.

Ongoing opportunities for personal and professional growth include a multifaceted Wellness Program for health and physical fitness, an employee degree program, online skill training, participation in university governance, and recognition for dedicated service.

To attract outstanding faculty and staff and to assist couples with dual-career placement, Cornell joined with Syracuse University in 2007 to launch the Upstate New York Higher Education Recruitment Consortium. Through this program, 24 colleges and universities post faculty and staff positions, aiding couples in finding equally satisfying positions in the same geographic area.

Cornell is working to increase the number of women faculty in the sciences and engineering, where women have been historically underrepresented. A grant from the National Science Foundation in 2006 led to creation of the ADVANCE Center, which focuses on recruitment, faculty development, the diversity climate, and evaluation of promotion and retention practices. Most recently, the ADVANCE Center has initiated training on bias in academic searches.

In June 2008, about 20 Cornell faculty members participated in a three-day conference, the Faculty Institute for Diversity, in which they discussed ways to diversify Cornell's curriculum to encompass such issues as class, disability, ethnicity, gender, religion, and sexual orientation. The institute, expected to take place annually, is one of several diversity initiatives launched by Cornell in the 2007–2008 academic year. Another, the Feedback program, provides a way for staff, students, and faculty to share personal experiences that made them feel welcome or unwelcome at Cornell.

In another recent development, the university has completed initial steps in developing a comprehensive strategic plan related to disability. The plan, still in progress, will focus on technology, communication, physical access, employment, emergency preparedness/evacuation, and educational opportunities for students and employees. Meanwhile, staff members involved in campus construction projects have been trained in disability access guidelines, and a web page provides essential information for faculty, staff, students, and visitors with disabilities (www.cornell.edu/disability/).

The university is also exploring the best ways to measure our overall success in creating an inclusive community, by use of metrics such as access, retention, academic excellence, and climate. More complete and accurate measurements should enable us to direct our diversity efforts in the most effective way possible.

Commitment and Communication

Enhancing the campus climate of diversity and inclusion is one of Cornell's most important priorities. Since late 2006, the president and provost have co-chaired the University Diversity Council, which oversees diversity efforts across the campus.

On the web, Cornell's home page includes a "Diversity and Inclusiveness" link, which opens up a wealth of information on our past and current diversity efforts, diversity-related accomplishments, and events that reflect the diversity of the campus. The site also provides contact information for university and college diversity offices and highlights opportunities for members of the Cornell community to become involved.

Also on this site you will find a listing of Cornell's three diversity goals—well worth reiterating here:

1. to ensure faculty, staff, and students have access to the knowledge and conceptual frameworks required to think critically about human diversity.
2. to ensure that our community embraces and supports individuals from all racial, ethnic, religious, gender, sexual orientation, class, disability, and nationality groups in their chosen pursuits.
3. to enhance the diversity of our administration, faculty, staff, and students.

I believe that a diverse work and educational environment benefits not only the individuals for whom opportunities are expanded but also the entire university community, and that our efforts have an impact locally, nationally, and internationally. I also believe that Cornell, as an institution of education and discovery, has a responsibility to engage with the public through public service, outreach, economic development, technology transfer, and cultural opportunities to realize the potential of all our people.

Cornell has a proud record in the area of diversity and inclusion, and I am committed to building on that legacy of leadership.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David J. Skorton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

David J. Skorton

