

Cornell awards reflect forward-thinking employer's employment policies

BY NANCY DOOLITTLE

Consider the following: The workforce is aging, women make up nearly half of it, and it is more diverse than ever.

According to the American Association of Retired Persons, in 2000, 13 percent of the U.S. workforce was 55 and older; by 2010, 17 percent will be.

At Cornell, in 2006, 17 percent of the nonacademic staff, 27 percent of the academic nonfaculty (lecturers; instructors; teaching, research and extension associates; librarians; and archivists), and 44 percent of the faculty were 55 and older. Almost 50 percent of the staff is between 40 and 54 years old, and almost 50 percent of faculty is between 50 and 59 (see chart on next page).

Cornell staffers retire earlier than do Cornell faculty: 78 percent of staff retire before 65; 76 percent of faculty retire after 65.

Women make up 46 percent of the U.S. workforce. By 2014, the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) estimates that figure will rise to 47 percent. At Cornell, women are 50 percent of the workforce: Women make up 58 percent of nonacademic staff, 45 percent of academic staff and 25 percent of the faculty.

The U.S. workforce is also increasingly diverse, with Hispanic men and women comprising the fastest growing segment: From 1995 to 2005, the national labor force has experienced an 11 percent and 18 percent increase in black men and women, respectively; and a 63 percent and 60 percent increase in Hispanic men and women, respectively.

From 1996 to 2006, Cornell has experienced a 39 percent growth in the number of minorities (Asian, black, Hispanic, Native American) in its workforce, increasing from a total of 665 to 926, which represents nearly 10 percent of its faculty and staff.

For those who forecast trends, all of these figures are related.

Large numbers of Cornell faculty and staff will soon be of retirement age. Because the nation as a whole is aging, it will be hard to replace them. If Cornell intends to replace them with a proportion of women and minorities that is reflective of the composition of the nation's workforce, that challenge will be even greater. Therefore, it is in the university's best interest to create a working environment that will attract and retain a diversified workforce, as well as to encourage older workers to continue to be productive members of the workforce, engaged and current in their skills and expertise.

In the past year the university received several workplace awards that indicate Cornell is moving in the right direction. They were:

AARP award for programs for older adults

The AARP highlighted Cornell's Catastrophic Leave policy, the long-term care insurance benefit that is offered to spouses, same-sex partners, parents, in-laws and grandparents, as well as Cornell's extensive learning and development opportunities. The AARP also noted Cornell's retirement programs, wellness program offerings (including older adult fitness classes), many networking opportunities (including the Cornell Retirees Association and the Cornell Association of Professors Emeriti) and alternative work arrangements.

"AARP's recognition of Cornell as a 'best employer for people over 50' – for the second year in a row – reinforces the university's commitment to addressing work, life and family challenges for people of all ages," said Lynette Chappell-



ROBERT BARKER/UNIVERSITY PHOTOGRAPHY

Lynette Chappell-Williams, Office Workforce, Diversity, Equity and Life Quality (center), talks with Gary Ferguson, Ithaca Downtown Partnership (left), and Steven Coker, Five Star Construction Services, Inc., at the first annual Supplier Diversity Open House, held at the Ramada Inn on December 12, 2006. The Supplier Diversity Program at Cornell University reflects the university's commitment to utilize a wide and socially diverse pool of competitive suppliers for goods and services. Representatives from Office for Human Services, Campus Life, The Cornell Store, Contracts & Capital Projects, Statler Hotel and three teams from the Office for Purchasing Services participated in the open house.

Williams, director of Cornell's Office of Workforce Diversity, Equity and Life Quality.

Working Mothers Award

"Cornell is exceptional for its continuing commitment to working mothers," said Carol Evans, CEO of Working Mother Media, publisher of Working Mother magazine, in naming Cornell a top employer for working mothers. As one of only two universities so recognized, Cornell was cited for its flex policy, health insurance benefits for part-time staff working 20 hours or more a week, parenting seminars and discounted college tuition, academic and sports camps, child-care grant program and the parental leave policies for faculty and staff. In receiving the award, Mary Opperman, Cornell vice president for human resources, said, "Cornell is committed to continuing its emphasis on work/life programs as faculty, staff and students balance their commitment to their work and studies with their commitment to their families, broadly defined."

A best place for postdocs

This commitment to a broad range of work and life needs was highlighted in The Scientist magazine, which ranked Cornell in 16th place as a best place for postdoctoral researchers to work and cited Cornell's full health benefits for postdocs – including retirement accounts – as a factor in Cornell's high ranking.

Supporting people with disabilities

Cornell was recognized by the New York State Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities for its

efforts to fully incorporate individuals with disabilities into the workforce both in its recruitment efforts and in its coordinated set of disability accommodation services to its students, faculty and staff. See the university's new disability information Web page, at <<http://www.cornell.edu/disability/>>, for a listing of these services.

Cornell also serves as the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Employment Policy for Persons with Disabilities, which aims to increase the employment and economic self-sufficiency of people with disabilities and improve the quality of their lives. See the Employment Policy RRTC Web site <<http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/edi/p-eprrtc.cfm>> for more information.

In support of veterans

Cornell's recruitment and networking activities, along with targeted programming and support services, have garnered Cornell an honorable mention by G.I. Jobs. The university's support of veterans includes participation in job fairs, partnering with Department of Labor groups and Veterans Administration Outreach, networking breakfasts and luncheons held by WDELQ and ROTC and special programming on Veterans Appreciation Day.

A best employer for Tompkins County

Most recently – and closest to home – Cornell received the inaugural Tompkins County Large Employer of the Year award, based on its holistic approach to addressing diversity issues, including equal employment and affirmative action, diversity, inclusiveness and work life/family issues and its commitment to being a responsible city, county and state citizen.

"Cornell has worked especially hard in recent years to provide innovative programs and services that meet the needs of our past, present and prospective employees," said Opperman. "We are honored that our efforts to create a welcoming, diverse and inclusive educational and work environment are being recognized at the local level."

"The changing face of our workforce – nationally, locally and at Cornell – provides us with tremendous opportunities as well as challenges," said Chappell-Williams. "The more we are able to think creatively about the many varying needs of our diverse populations, the more we can tailor Cornell's programs and services to meet those needs, energizing and enriching our interactions with each other as citizens of the Cornell community and of upstate New York."

Age Distribution of Faculty and Staff, FY06

