

# COMMITMENT

The Alumni Newsletter of the Meinig Family Cornell National Scholars, The Cornell Tradition and the Hunter R. Rawlings III Cornell Presidential Research Scholars

SPRING 2007

## INSIDE THE ALUMNI NEWS...

Alumni Updates 2

Nationals News 5

Tradition News 7

RCPRS News 9

### Save the dates

June 7 - 10, 2007

REUNION

June 14, 2007

MFCNS ALUMNI MEETING  
NYC

### MISSION STATEMENT

The Cornell Commitment recognizes, rewards and encourages further development of a select group of students who exemplify Cornell's commitment to academic excellence, work and service; research and discovery; and leadership and learning and in so doing enrich their experience at Cornell and beyond.

The Cornell Commitment  
103 Day Hall  
Ithaca, NY 14853

## Pew Charitable Trusts awards Cornell \$2 million for student and campuswide research

By David Brand *writing for The Cornell Chronicle*

The Pew Charitable Trusts has awarded Cornell \$2 million over four years to support a research scholarship program for undergraduates. The grant also will support universitywide interdisciplinary research and educational initiatives.

"The Pew Charitable Trusts has given Cornell a great vote of confidence by investing in undergraduate education and in key interdisciplinary areas important to the science and culture of our world," said Cornell President David J. Skorton. "The Pew grant is a wonderful affirmation of Cornell's priorities."

From the grant, \$1 million will go to supporting the Hunter R. Rawlings III Cornell Presidential Research Scholars (RCPRS) program, which provides top undergraduates with significant research support over four years. Students collaborate with a faculty member of their choice to design and plan individualized research. Since 1996, when the program began, 544 students and 325 faculty members have participated in RCPRS. The program's success has made it an important recruiting tool for high-achieving students.

The grant allots a further \$1 million to

universitywide interdisciplinary research and educational initiatives in sustainable development, digital information and the new life sciences. Among other things, the grant will pay for teaching assistants for a large new undergraduate course on worldwide sustainability, called State of the Planet, and for Cornell's participation in the U.S. Department of Energy's International Solar Decathlon competition to build energy-efficient housing. Cornell's student team took second place in the competition when it was last held in 2005.

SUPPORTING CIVIC LIFE

The grant also will enable Cornell to develop a library of genomics-related case studies, which will be shared with scholars at other institutions. The VIVO database of life sciences information will be extended to showcase the work of Cornell faculty in engineering, the social and physical sciences, and the humanities. Five teaching assistants will be hired, and two faculty coordinators will receive release time to lead faculty workshops on interdisciplinary curriculum development and research projects in sustainable development.

The Pew Charitable Trusts, which serves the public interest by providing information, advancing policy solutions and supporting civic life, will make awards totaling \$248 million in fiscal year 2007.

# Current News from Commitment Alumni

**Rebecca Vichniac '04** is a Senior Research Assistant in Economic Studies at the The Brookings Institution in Washington, DC. (MFCNS)

**Chris Spurgin '97** recently moved to a new job as a software developer at Bridgewater in Connecticut. (Tradition)

**Fawn Langerman '90** worked for 13 years as a mechanical engineer, and reports that she is now in medical school at Ohio State University. (Tradition)

**Richelle Cariño '04** resides in Central Valley California where she works as a City Planner. (Tradition)

**Katie Cody-Becker '02** was married in August (2006) to fellow Cornellian Adam M. Becker '02. She works as a Marketing Manager for ValueCentric, a company that serves the pharmaceutical industry, in Orchard Park, NY. Katie resides in Varysburg, New York. (Tradition)

**Craig Schranz '98** is serving in the Navy and is a resident in Emergency Medicine at the Naval Medical Center San Diego. After graduating from Georgetown Medical School in 2002, he trained as a flight surgeon and deployed to Iraq with the Marine Corps. He is married to Joanna and has two kids; Yael and Noah. (Tradition)

**Ellen Behrstock '01** has been living abroad for the past several years. Currently she is in the final stages of a PhD at the University of Oxford that looks at aspects of the teacher labor markets in England and the United States. Ellen writes, "specifically I'm trying to tackle teacher shortages. Alongside my research, I have been very much involved as a



founding member and Vice-President for Programmes of Oxford Women in Politics (OxWip), whose mission is to advance the role of women in positions of leadership in the governmental, corporate, academic, and non-profit sectors. Upon completing my PhD, I hope to move back to my hometown of Chicago and work to increase society's investment in public schools and in teachers." (MFCNS)

**Cindy Cho '04** is in law school at Indiana University-Bloomington. She completed a summer clerkship with a judge on the 7th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals in 2006. (MFCNS)

**Michael Klinger '06** is serving as a Coro Fellow this year in New York City. Every year, through a national process, each of the five regional Coro centers picks twelve (sixteen in Pittsburgh and St. Louis) college graduates for a rigorous nine-month series of internships, interviews, public service projects, and seminar meetings. By the end of the internship, Fellows will have interned in a government agency, a business, a community organization, a media organization, a labor union, and a political campaign. (Tradition)

**Jennifer Lee '05** is in Media & Telecom Investment Banking at CREDIT SUISSE in New York City. (MFCNS)

**Elisa Jaclyn Willet '03** graduated from Fordham Law School in 2006 and now works at Weil, Gotshal & Manges, LLP. She is working in the Litigation & Regulatory department, specifically in Complex Commercial (Civil) Litigation. (Tradition)

**Marilyn Wilson Lund '83** works for Nurturing Results. The company was formed to help provide exposure to higher quality alternatives for our children. (MFCNS)

**Erin Dodd '98** writes, “this summer (2006) I took a leave from my job at NYU to work at the Museo Nacional Sicán in Ferreñafe - Lambayeque, Peru. This extraordinary museum houses finds from local tombs, runs outreach programs to teach local communities the importance of preserving cultural patrimony, and works with the government and community to preserve the nearby Bosque Pomac, the largest dry desert in the Americas and the location of a major Sicán city. My job here includes marketing and fundraising. The more visitors we bring to the museum, the more work the archaeologists can do at the site. If anyone is going to Peru for vacation, email me for tips on visiting this unique place!” eed1@cornell.edu (Tradition)

**Liz (Kallenbach) Bell '87** and her husband Peter Bell '86 live in California and dedicate much of their time to working for the non-profit organization, Cure Autism Now (CAN). Liz writes, “Our support of a national autism research organization led to our formation of the Philadelphia chapter and coordination of several events, Peter’s appointment to the Board of Directors, and in 2004, his move from the corporate world to become president and CEO of CAN. My time is spent supporting the children, as well as doing volunteer work for CAN and our local school district.” (Tradition)

## Alum Connects Elderly With Youth

By Elizabeth Manapsal, staff writer for *The Cornell Daily Sun*

Most women know the power of looking great — especially Rachel Doyle '05, president of Glamour Gals Foundation, a non-profit organization that aims to create “smiles that span all generations” by making over the elderly living in nursing homes.

Founded when Doyle was just 17 and a junior in high school, the main mission of the Glamour Gals Foundation is to bridge the generational gap between elderly women and teenage girls through the transformative power of makeovers. Motivated to start the organization after her grandmother’s death from loneliness, Doyle oversaw her first makeover in 2000.

“The great thing about Glamour Gals is that you can be really creative when an idea works,” she said. “You can experiment with it so much.”

However, it was during her time at Cornell that Doyle really expanded the organization. As a policy analysis and management major in the College of Human Ecology, Doyle was an active member of The Cornell Tradition. In this program, Doyle could devote at least 20 hours a week to Glamour Gals and get paid for it under a work-study program.

She also received guidance from Prof. Deborah Streetter, applied economics and management. “She really helped me step back and evaluate what I created and then plan for the future,” Doyle said.

Doyle again finds herself looking toward the future as she feels the foundation has reached a critical stage. “As president of the organization, we’re at full capacity at the volunteer stage,” she explained. “You can only manage well to a certain point as a volunteer. We really need paid staff members.” She added that the organization needs to focus on building its internal structure and improving its overall management.

Technology is also an integral part of the structure of Glamour Gals. While conducting most of her business operations via email and teleconferences, Doyle has also established an intranet system between all 50 chapters, where volunteers can freely communicate with one another and upload shareable content. This system enables chapter presidents to virtually manage their organization. *continued on page 4.*

# Spotlight on Commitment Alumna

## Caring for the Elderly

*continued from page 3.*

After being featured on The Oprah Winfrey Show, CBS's Early Morning Show and publications such as the New York Times and CosmoGirl, Doyle has come a long way since high school when she first started the organization. Then, there was little to no strategy.

"I want to run this organization with the heart of a nonprofit but the brains of a business," Doyle said. "We'll create revenue using business strategy, but ultimately it will be a nonprofit."

Some of the ways Doyle intends to do this are through expanding to

other areas besides doing makeovers for the elderly. Although the main mission of the organization is to decrease the disconnection between elderly and youth, Doyle commented that to establish the longevity of Glamour Gals she must have an outside source of profit. One such project in development is Glamour Gal parties for pre-teens and young girls, where the girls give each other makeovers with assistance from the organization.

"Mega-Makeovers" is another event Doyle is proud of coordinating. According to Doyle, "over 100 volunteers blanket a city and hit four or five nursing homes on a single day to give makeovers to the elderly."

Doyle recognizes that the heart of the organization rests in the volunteers' efforts to raise awareness about care for the elderly. Glamour Gals recently hosted a Glamour in the City gala and awards ceremony in New York City to honor the organization's volunteers and increase overall awareness about treatment towards the elderly.

"A really great component of the organization is that it creates compassionate leadership

because of service the volunteers do on a local level," Doyle said.

By purchasing Glamour Gal bracelets sold by the Cornell Hotel Society for \$15 a bracelet, people can support the organization, Doyle said. Each bracelet features pink lace wrapped in art deco plastic. The use of these two different materials is meant to reinforce the organization's message — connecting the old with the new.

Currently, there are over 50 chapters throughout the U.S. and over 600 registered volunteers.

But despite her success, Doyle admitted, "We're at the point where we've grown so much in quality and at the level we operate, we need to make the leap into a paid-staff organization if we want to continue to grow at this rate. We need more people, and I'm willing to take this risk."

Send us your story!  
sws36@cornell.edu

### TIPS FOR STAYING IN TOUCH & STAYING INFORMED

\*Update your contact information with Alumni Affairs.  
<https://directory.alumni.cornell.edu/>

\*Check out regional opportunities to get involved. To view the online calendar, go to: <http://online.aad.cornell.edu/Content/event/calendar/>. Cornell Clubs exist in 40 of the 50 states, as well as Ontario and Puerto Rico.

\*Become involved with CAAAN. CAAAN is the Cornell Alumni Admissions Ambassador Network, a group of over 6,000 alumni volunteers who assist Cornell Admissions in recruiting superior undergraduate applicants. Get in touch with CAAAN today to get involved in recruiting the next class of Cornell students.  
<http://caaan.admissions.cornell.edu/>

# Meinig Family Cornell National Scholars

## Freshman Forum Initiative underway for spring

The spring 2007 component of Freshman Forum has historically been a project-based initiative that required groups of students to analyze a particular element of the Cornell campus and/or the first-year experience. MFCNS program staff work with other university officials to identify issues of concern so that the results of the students' investigation and analysis can benefit various campus offices as they plan new initiatives or work to improve current situations.

A list of potential projects was presented at the first meeting of Freshman Forum this spring. This year's project topic will ask students to tackle stress at Cornell University.

Two questions the students will strive to answer are:

- 1) *What, in the practices of the university, contribute to stress on campus?*
- 2) *What are the environmental factors that cause/add to students' feelings of stress?*

Students will divide into groups to examine the various components of the main questions and then come together to consolidate information for a final presentation.

The factors that will be investigated are academics, financial impact, extracurricular activities, personal relationships, availability and usage of student resources and services, and coping mechanisms. Additionally, students will investigate other institutions for comparison.

Past projects included civil discourse, former President Lehman's call to engagement, and Cornell's vision on diversity and inclusiveness, *Open Doors, Open Hearts, and Open Minds*.

Projects will be presented April 18, 2007 before administrators, staff and faculty.

### UPCOMING MFCNS EVENTS

Freshman Forum Presentation  
April 18, 2007

Excellence in Leadership Award presentation &  
Graduation Ceremony  
May 25, 2007

## Spotlight on National Scholar Nathaniel Weiss '08

*Nathaniel Weiss '08 shares his experiences as one of the youngest leaders at the helm of Student Agencies, Inc.*

*What made you choose Cornell?* Coming from a relatively small New England boarding school with a focus on humanities, I wanted my college experience to be at a research institution with not only a large student population, but also the opportunity for interdisciplinary study. Cornell fit this mold well because it has seven undergraduate colleges, and students have the opportunity to take classes across colleges.

*How did you decide on your major?* My philosophy on undergraduate education is to focus on developing key skills—such as writing, reading, and speaking well, and the ability to think critically—as opposed to building a specific knowledge base necessary for a certain career. So, while my career interests (business & entrepreneurship) aren't directly related to the study of history, I chose history because it is an academic subject about which I am passionate that also fosters skill development.

*How has MFCNS impacted your undergraduate experience?* Since being accepted into MFCNS at the beginning of this academic year, I have found the organization to be an excellent forum in which to meet a diverse group of Cornellians that are engaged both inside and outside the classroom.

*With which organization or group do you commit most of your time and energy?* I dedicate the majority of my time and energy to Student Agencies, Inc. (SAI). SAI is the nation's oldest independent student-run corporation, tracing its roots to 1894. Its mission is to offer Cornell undergraduates the extraordinary opportunity to gain practical experience starting and running businesses, and is composed primarily of six business divisions which generate over \$2 million in revenues annually. As a freshman, I managed Big Red Shipping & Storage, SAI's largest division and the University's

*continued on page 6.*

# Meinig Family Cornell National Scholars

## MFCNS Alumni Reception

SAVE THE DATE

June 14, 2007 6 - 9pm NYC Cornell Club

The Meinig Family Cornell National Scholars Alumni Reception is just a few short months away. The Cornell Club in New York City sets the stage for this annual event, which brings together alumni, current students, and new MFCNS students and their families. This is an opportunity to network, catch up with former friends and meet new ones.

Hosted by the Alumni Steering Committee, the event will feature a guest speaker, good food, and good company. The senior recipient of the Excellence in Leadership award will deliver remarks and reflections on his or her time at Cornell as well. If you plan to be in or around New York City, consider a stop into the reception - June 14, 2007 6 - 9pm. Formal invitations will be sent in late May.

## Spotlight on National Scholar

### Nathaniel Weiss '08 *cont. from pg 5*

preferred student-storage provider. In January, I took over as the student President of SAI, overseeing all six business units.

I chose to become involved in this organization because of its emphasis on experiential learning. SAI is unique in its ability to offer Cornell undergraduates the opportunity to apply the theoretical skills learned in the classroom to real-life, tangible business situations. Another reason that I chose to join SAI was the balance it placed on emphasizing a strong “ownership culture” while providing a robust structure of support and mentoring. While student managers have profit/loss responsibility for their respective agency, and are accountable for all aspects of that agency’s operations, they are also given the opportunity to seek mentoring and guidance from a full-time staff of business professionals, as well as two Johnson School fellows that serve as in-house consultants.

*What is the most rewarding aspect of your involvement with your current organization(s)?* The most rewarding aspect of my involvement in Student Agencies comes from managing uncertainty. Almost daily I have the opportunity to address business problems that do not have one clear right or wrong answer. This can often be daunting, as individual decisions—for example, how to price a new service, or which supplier to partner with—can decide whether or not an initiative will be successful. Sometimes these decisions turn out well, sometimes they don’t. But through the experience of making these decisions, I have learned a great deal about the process of solving problems—and making the best use of the (often limited) information at hand.

*What are the short and long term impacts of your work in your organization?* In the short-term, the impact of my work is measured by the quality of the products and services that Student Agencies provides to the community. To name a few, SAI rents apartments, provides storage and shipping services, and sells bus tickets to NYC—all necessary and important services for many typical Cornell undergraduates.

One of the coolest features of SAI is that it grows organically, in that individual managers—within their one year at the helm of their businesses—have the opportunity to make decisions that can impact their businesses for years

down the road. As a result, as president, I try to synthesize

the results of short-term operational decisions with the organization’s long-term goal of sustainable growth—and the accompanying consequence of this growth, that more Cornell undergraduates have the opportunity to be involved in SAI.

*Who has been your mentor throughout your time at Cornell?* Dan Kathan (BS '70, MBA '73), CEO of Student Agencies, has been my mentor throughout my time at Cornell. Dan is one of the full-time, professional members of the SAI staff. Through his accessibility and experience, he is an incredible resource to the student management staff by providing thoughtful advice and guidance on business issues.

*Upon graduation Nathaniel plans to pursue a career in either corporate leadership or entrepreneurship.*

*“I chose to become involved in this organization because of its emphasis on experiential learning.”*

# The Cornell Tradition

## The Cornell Tradition Seeks Nominations

The Cornell Tradition is seeking nominations for the **Jennifer Herskowitz Cornell Tradition Point of Light award**. The award is in memory of Jennifer Loren Herskowitz '88 who was a Cornell Tradition fellow from 1984 until 1988. Jennifer graduated with a B.S. from the College of Human Ecology. She was very active within The Cornell Tradition and was instrumental in establishing a thriving alumni network in the New City metropolitan area. She and several other alumni created the highly successful Big Red Apple Scavenger Hunt (BRASH) event each winter. Sadly, Jennifer's brilliant life was cut short by pancreatic cancer in 2003.

The award will honor either a current Tradition senior who has gone above and beyond in service to The Cornell Tradition or a Tradition alumna/alumnus who continues in the Tradition spirit of service to others. The award will be presented at the graduation barbecue, held Friday, May 25, 2007.

To nominate a fellow alumna/alumnus or yourself, please submit a letter of recommendation to Stephanie Spackman, sws36@cornell.edu.

## Debra S. Newman '02 Cornell Tradition Community Recognition Award Recipient named

This year's recipient is **Terry Byrnes**, President of the Ithaca Public Education Initiative (IPEI). Ms. Byrnes was part of the founding and served as treasurer before taking the helm in 2002. Terry is leading IPEI through a period of expansion of its mission and its capacity to raise funds and allocate them most effectively throughout the Ithaca public schools system. Terry was also recognized in 2004 with the Anne T. Jones Community Service Award from the Human Services Coalition of Tompkins County.

Mrs. Byrnes' accomplishment will be commemorated on a permanent plaque that resides in Cornell University's Day Hall and given \$1,000 to be designated as a charitable contribution to the non-profit organization of her choice.

The Cornell Tradition Student Advisory Council (SAC) established the Community Recognition Award to

recognize and honor a community member who has demonstrated a strong commitment to service and/or leadership in a community service setting.

Debra Newman, an alumna of The Cornell Tradition, exemplified these ideals. She firmly believed that a true appreciation of the value – indeed the necessity – of applying our best efforts in service to the community was a lesson best learned by interacting with community leaders. In the fall of 2002, Debra was killed in a tragic automobile accident while attending law school. Shortly thereafter, the SAC renamed the Community Recognition Award in her honor.

## New initiative allows emerging student leaders to attend fall conference

Eleven Tradition fellows attended a conference in Washington, DC on November 10 & 11, 2006. The Bringing Theory to Practice Conference was a forum for undergraduate students to engage in discussion, brainstorming and idea sharing around the topic of student leadership and civic engagement. The event was sponsored by the Charles Engelhard Foundation of New York City and offered in partnership with the Association of American Colleges and Universities.

Students from Cornell had the opportunity to exchange ideas with a diverse group of students from across the nation. The purpose of the meeting was to advance students' leadership role in engaging their peers' learning. It was designed to encourage college students to reflect upon their own attitudes and leadership abilities within the area of service learning. A series of interactive presentations and discussions provided students with tools to help them grow as both leaders and students as well as inspire them to continue their service activities after graduation.

One participant commented, "the experience was a terrific addition to the Cornell Tradition fellowship experience. Gaining perspective of other students around the country on things that Tradition stands for--- student leadership, volunteerism, civic engagement---was great."

Tradition fellows were asked to apply for a spot to represent the Tradition at the conference. Fellows were selected based on demonstrated commitment to service and civic engagement, their class year, and personal and professional goals and interests.

## Spotlight on Tradition Fellow, Tom Noble '08

*Geographic location and the beauty of area drew Tom Noble to Cornell.*

Cornell was the university I always wanted to attend as soon I began thinking about college. My family is from Syracuse, NY so staying relatively close to home and my family was important to me. The more I learned about Cornell, the more I wanted to go here. My father and I used to go hiking in Ithaca often, so I always really loved the area itself, it's so beautiful!

*How did you decide on your major?*

I came into Cornell as a Mathematics major, thinking about going to Medical School upon graduation. After spending my first three semesters on that track, I switched gears because medicine was not the right path for me. The interdisciplinary focus of the American Studies program appealed to me. Classes in Government, History, English, and many others all apply to my major.

*How has Tradition impacted your undergraduate experience?* The Tradition fellowship encouraged me to seek many different ways to gain my required work and service hours. This led directly to my participation in an Alternative Spring Break to Philadelphia, PA. Initially, the trip was simply an interesting way to churn out Tradition hours, however; that week was a life-changing experience for me. Soon after, I became increasingly devoted to concepts like social justice and civic engagement, which in turn opened more doors for me to get involved in relevant issues here at Cornell University.

I got involved with service at Cornell before I was an official student by participating in Pre-Orientation Service Trips (POST). My ability to participate in this was made possible through funding by The Cornell Tradition. These trips allow new students the opportunity to engage in four days of service before Orientation. I have since become a leader for this program and several service-oriented programs both on and off-campus

including Alternative Breaks, which coordinates 14 service-learning trips over Cornell's academic breaks; and On Site Volunteer Services, a student-run non-profit organization that recruits, trains, and coordinates volunteers to work at over 60 other non-profits in the Ithaca and Tompkins County area.

**"Having the opportunity to help make a difference in whatever way I can is a really enriching experience."**

*What has inspired you to continue your involvement in community service/vol-*

*unteering?* Some of the non-profit agencies that I've had a chance to work with are absolutely amazing. Having the opportunity to help them make a difference in whatever way I can is a really enriching experience.

I have consistently volunteered at Longview, an assisted living home in Ithaca. Speaking with the residents there has been most meaningful; they really enjoy talking to the students. It's great when you can listen to someone else's stories and make them happy just because you're listening.

*What are the short and long term impacts of your work within the organization/at Cornell or in the community?* One of the amazing things about being so involved in Ithaca is that there's so many interesting people you're able to meet that are doing incredible things in this community. The relationships I've developed with agency and university members is going to leave a long-lasting impact on me. For example, Sorby Grant '07, another Tradition fellow, has worked in many of the same organizations that I have, serving as a great role model and a terrific friend.

*What are your future plans?* Not sure which field I'll end up in, but I would like to go to graduate school at some point and continue work in some sort of non-profit administration.



## Film Student, Trevor White '07, talks about his work and his inspiration

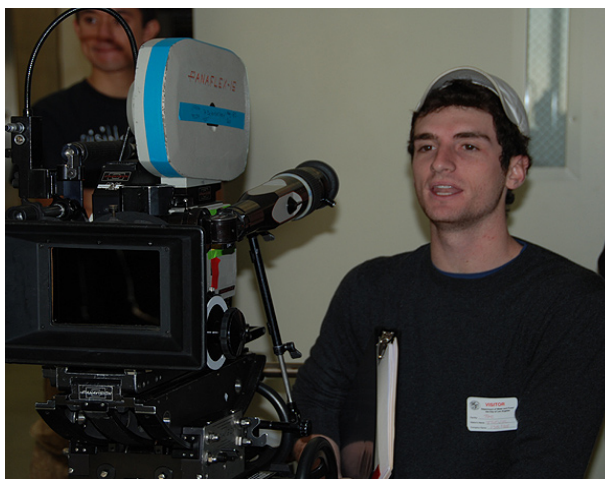
During his time here at Cornell, Trevor White has had the opportunity of learning the craft of filmmaking through practice rather than theory alone. He has made 7 short films, and with each one, reports that he has taken away an overwhelming amount of knowledge.

Trevor writes, "During the summers after both my sophomore and junior years, RCPRS helped make it possible for me to work as a production assistant on the film *Miami Vice* in both Miami and Los Angeles. Working for a big-budget production, and seeing all of the pieces that put that puzzle together, inspired me to take on a far greater challenge for my final year at Cornell."

This year, Trevor has been working on an honors thesis film that he wrote and directed. The film, which was shot in Los Angeles over winter break and sponsored by the Panavision Young Filmmakers Grant, used 16 professional crewmembers and as White noted, "an incredibly experienced cast. Overall, this remarkable process has helped prepare me to enter the world of professional filmmaking."

*Why did you choose Cornell?* I chose to come to Cornell as a result of opportunities that RCPRS had offered me. Not many film schools will allow a student to take control over the projects he or she truly wants to make, and help them fund it along the way.

*Why did you choose this major?* I knew going into school that I was going to be a film major. In fact, I knew from the age of 10 that I was going to be a filmmaker, so I must admit that this decision wasn't too difficult.



*Who has inspired your work?* My parents have inspired all of my work. They have been so supportive and believe in everything that I want to undertake. My mother, who is a filmmaker as well, has taught me so much about storytelling, and, has always been there as an honest critic to help me improve.

*Describe the most rewarding aspect of your project.* The most rewarding aspect of what I do is watching the final product. There isn't a better feeling in the world than to sit down in a theater with tons of people who know nothing about your film and watch them become involved in it. Their reactions and expressions are always what reinforce my reason for becoming a director.

After I graduate, I am moving out to Los Angeles, where my older brother and I will continue to expand the production company we have begun. We have been aggressive in going after projects, and hopefully as a result, we will be producing and directing a couple within the next few years.

*What are the impacts of your work at Cornell?* During this most recent year, I have been given several opportunities to share my experiences with others, both within and outside of the realm of film. I hope that I have ignited a fire in those who are interested in filmmaking. In my own experience within this field, the more aggressive you are, the more you will get out of it.

*Who has been your mentor throughout your time with this project?* Marilyn Rivchin, who is the senior filmmaking lecturer, has been my mentor, professor and friend throughout my years here. She has taught and given me so much, and none of my success here could have been possible without her tremendous support.

## Bethany Ojalehto '08 talks about her created major and RCPRS

Bethany Ojalehto '08, came to Cornell from Monroe, Washington. Her current research ties together her interest in social cognition, law, and policy of forced migration. She has fashioned independent research in the cognitive sciences that explores children's cognitive development in situations of war and displacement, with a particular emphasis on the role of spiritual cognition in refugee children's development of self. In other research, she seeks to address questions of legal theory and praxis surrounding international refugee and human rights law, from the perspective that global "humanitarian" systems must re-conceptualize policy and authority structures in response to the imperatives of refugee agency, dignity, and human rights entitlements.

*How did you choose your major?* I am fortunate to be given the opportunity to design an individual curriculum within the broader context of a Human Ecology education. In my self-designed major, I seek to integrate three major disciplinary approaches in refugee studies towards a cohesive framework bridging cognitive development, law, and policy in contexts of war and displacement.

*How has RCPRS impacted your undergraduate experience?* In the broadest sense, RCPRS has allowed me to reformulate the building blocks of my undergraduate career. As a student who would otherwise have found

it necessary to take a part-time job, the opportunity to do research for wages allowed me to merge academic and financial imperatives successfully. My Research Support Account enabled me to pursue critical opportunities internationally for legal studies and independent research—both crucial in light of the notorious difficulty involved in securing grants for undergraduate projects. These tangible advantages embody an innovative approach to undergraduate education that recognizes and fosters students' capacity to go beyond didactic learning. By embedding Research Scholars within a talented network of professors and peers, catalyzing innovative collaborations, and supporting undergraduate research initiatives through recognition and credibility, Research Scholars are afforded a unique space within Cornell to formulate their own theoretical questions and pursue these ideas through serious research inquiry. In my own experience, this nexus of opportunity and support in the context of a world-renowned research university allows for an education in which courses are only the

starting point for the independent pursuit of knowledge in diverse dimensions of real world experience.

*What are you currently working on?* I am designing my honors thesis to be conducted among refugee children living in Kakuma refugee camp, Kenya, this summer. I am also currently involved in two faculty research labs; one project involving a longitudinal study of middle childhood across cognitive domains, and an-

*continued on page 11.*



# Rawlings Cornell Presidential Research Scholars

other involving children's ability to understand human intention. Since my arrival at Cornell, Professor Qi Wang's lab in cross-cultural cognition has been my core research involvement, while I make a point to explore other domains of faculty research (policy analysis, environments of poverty) as time allows.

*What has inspired your work?* My interests in cognition, spirituality, and human rights have led me to pursue these diverse threads of inquiry in different ways. Inspired by the theoretical and practical potential of likening these ideas in research, my independent work attempts to integrate different strands of inquiry into a more holistic understanding of the realities involved in refugee situations and describing the normative international obligations attendant upon this understanding.

I have been incredibly fortunate to receive the inspiration and support of Cornell professors who have encouraged me to take these ideas forward into practical realization. To this end, I owe an immense debt to my chief mentor, Professor Qi Wang, as well as the many other professors who have happily joined me in my various independent studies.

*What is the most rewarding aspect of your work?* I view all my work through the hopeful lens of successful praxis; believing that the theory generated by carefully designed research, being fully cognizant and attentive to the reality of human experience and dignity, will lead to meaningful synthesis of idea and practice.

*What are your future plans?* After taking a couple years off from the freneticism of academia, I hope to return to postgraduate studies in law and developmental psychology. It is my intent to combine these disciplines in a career of human rights advocacy for refugee children—both advocacy as it furthers our understanding of children's cognitive development in war and displacement, and also as it pertains to the international law and policy of asylum, integration, and "humanitarian" refu-

gee camps.

*Who has been your mentor throughout your research/work through RCPRS?* Professor Qi Wang has been my strongest supporter and advocate throughout my intellectual development and research at Cornell. I will forever be indebted to her for her careful coaching of my intellectual development and research expertise, but even more for her

constant belief in my capacity to realize my ideas through research. It is my hope that every Cornell undergraduate can be given a similar foundation of support and



*"In the broadest sense, RCPRS has allowed me to reformulate the building blocks of my undergraduate career."*



inspiration. Professors Rachel Dunifon and Steve Ceci have diligently supervised the construction

of my individual curriculum, while Professors Chuck Geisler, Shelley Feldman, and Nina Tannenwald have all been extraordinary in guiding my independent research ventures over the past three years.



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