

# COMMITMENT

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

Late Winter/Spring 2009

## INSIDE THE NEWS...

**Commitment News, Staff Profiles, & Events**  
**Alumni Updates & Profiles**

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

## Commitment students benefit from creation of student support accounts

As we shared in last quarter's newsletter, program requirements and benefits for The Cornell Tradition and Meinig Family Cornell National Scholars program were adjusted to better reflect recent changes made to the University's financial aid program.

From a student development perspective, the changes in policy and programming were thoughtfully considered: our goal was to add value to students' experi-



ences, without adding stress - either financially or in terms of time commitment.

When asked the effect program changes have had, one Tradition student noted that the decrease in work hours "makes it a lot less strenuous to complete the requirements. I've benefitted from the reduction by being able to go away for a semester and come back and complete my requirements in one semester without stress."

One of the biggest changes was the

creation of a \$3,500 student support account designed to increase the possibility for students to engage in service and leadership activities throughout the year.

Prior to this year, students were able to apply for a one-time living expense grant that was made available on a first come, first served basis. This grant could fund only summer ex-

periences that were at least 8 weeks long and 35 hours/week.

Although often inquired about, service trips, leadership and service projects, and any summer internship less than 8 weeks, were not considered for funding.

In reality, not every student has the need or the ability to do a summer internship and as such, a number of students were not able to benefit from the internship funding program. As a result of the changes, more students can and will use their support account.

In our new policy, funds are guaranteed to members in good standing; students may request grants for a variety of service, leadership, and/or career related experiences;

*continued on page 7*



*"My undergrad experience as been enriched by my winter trip and subsequent development of a service learning organization."*  
Ebony Ray '09  
The Cornell Tradition

## A Letter from the Director: Kristine M. DeLuca

According to a message to the campus from President David Skorton of December 16, 2008, Cornell University "...is facing a 10 percent budget shortfall caused by a combination of reduced state funding, a structural deficit in our operating budget, the loss of 27 percent in our endowment over the past six months, and a decline in philanthropic gifts. Prompt correction is necessary to confront a persistent negative financial outlook sweeping the entire higher education sector."

As a result of the above conditions, the university's leadership has adopted a set of proposals to protect the strength and character of Cornell, while dealing with financial challenges that impact all aspects of the university's balance sheet. To be successful, the plan requires support, involvement and sacrifice from faculty, staff, students and alumni. Once completed, Cornell will be best positioned for future growth and competitive strength.

One component of the plan required that all departments across the university reduce their expenditures for the remainder of this fiscal year (which goes through June 30, 2009). All of us in Student and Academic Services have also had to submit a budget reduction of 5% to be implemented in the next fiscal year (FY10) and it is anticipated that further reductions will be called for in FY11.

Given that The Cornell Commitment Office has already been running fairly lean, due to the reorganization of five years ago, it has been difficult to find further reductions in costs without affecting people (staff and students) and programming. One of the principles we decided to employ as we looked for areas to cut was to preserve the current student experience. The 900 students who make up The Cornell Commitment are our primary constituency and we hoped to minimize the negative impact on them as much as possible.

We are proud to say that we have done our best to preserve the core on-campus programs that support students' commitment to work and service, leadership and learning, and research and discovery. However, I am sorry to have to inform you that we have decided to eliminate the annual Meinig Family Cornell National Scholars Alumni Reception held in NYC, beginning with this year's event. This is not a decision that we took lightly. Given that it is the only off-site alumni event we sponsor, it is sad to see it go. I know it is an event that has received great reviews from those who have attended over the years. However, it seemed appropriate for this activity to be cut; in contrast to programming that directly affects the undergraduate experience.

This is in no way intended to diminish the appreciation we have for the connections between this office and our alumni, as well as the connections we're trying to foster between our alumni and our students. Ensuring the success of LINK becomes ever more important as this networking database was always intended to serve as our primary method of programming between current students and alumni. To that end, I would like to encourage all alumni from all three of our programs – The Cornell Tradition, the Meinig Family Cornell National Scholars, and the Rawlings Cornell Presidential Research Scholars – to sign up for LINK ([www.commitment.cornell.edu](http://www.commitment.cornell.edu); click on the LINK icon). Help us build a rich resource that allows students and alumni to make meaningful connections regardless of proximity and financial resources.

With best wishes,  
Kristine M. DeLuca  
Director, The Cornell Commitment

## LINK: Student-Alumni networking database update

As many of you know from our mailing last summer, we launched a new networking database that is designed to facilitate connections between students and alumni. We front-loaded the database with basic information on all our alumni (name, graduation year) but each profile would not be active until individuals went into the system to “update” their own entry. Our hope was that many of you would update your information in LINK and then in the fall we could begin marketing the usefulness of this tool to students.

Feedback from those of you who have accessed the system tell us that the security portion of the program is prohibitive. We acknowledge that logging in

We are looking for alumni to profile for the quarterly enews. If you served in a leadership capacity (SAC, SAB, Exec Board) for your program, and/or if you received an award (such as the Excellence in Leadership (National Scholars) or the Senior Recognition Award (Tradition)), please contact us with a brief description of where you are now, what you are doing, and anything new or exciting you would like to share with others.

and using LINK for some is not as easy as we would like.

For those who have tried to log into LINK and have been stymied by 1) the fact that you need a net id and password; or 2) that once you do log in, you have to update ALL of your contact information to use the networking

feature of the database, we ask you to give it one more try. Anytime you see a finger pointing, this indicates specific ‘directions’ for you on that particular page.

If you have to go through the extra step of requesting your password, we understand how insane it may seem to have to wait 5-7 days for it to be mailed to you in this electronic age. All passwords are kept in an encrypted database, and cannot be looked up by anyone. Please know it’s because we care very much about preserving your information and the exclusivity of this tool for Tradition, MFCNS and RCPRS students and alumni only.

With a bit of effort and diligence, you will be able to update your information and access the full benefits of the database. By updating your information, you will make it possible for students to use the networking database to have one leg up when they are

in their job or internship search; when they are relocating, or when they are considering a graduate or professional school.

In addition, you will have the ability to look up your former classmates and peers and re-connect with them. This database is for Commitment alumni and students only, and remember, you are a SELECT group who is committed to leadership and learning, work and service, and research and discovery.

Please take a few minutes now to get set up in LINK. If you have questions, or if we can help facilitate this process please do not hesitate to contact us. Below you will find directions on how to get started.

### GETTING STARTED

If you know your netID and password: Using your Cornell netID, you will first update the information that is already loaded into the network. After logging on, you will update your contact information, education, and career section and select your preferred mentoring areas, which would include categories such as career and industry advice. Once you have created a profile that best describes you, how you wish to be contacted, and by what method, then you are set to begin looking at other alumni who are participating in the network.

If you do not know your netID and password: We have supplied you with your netID, but you will also need a password to begin using it for many University websites. To get your secure password, go to this webpage and complete the online form: <http://www.alumni.cornell.edu/netid/request.cfm>.

Your password will be sent to you via standard mail within 5-7 days. Once you receive it, follow the instructions above for logging into the network. Thank you for your patience on this; we really wanted to keep this site exclusive to Commitment students and alumni.

If you have questions, you may access the FAQ page here: <http://www.cit.cornell.edu/services/netid/about/faq.cfm#forgot>

# The Cornell Commitment Alumni Profiles



## The Cornell Tradition Alumni Profile: Comron Saifi '06

*Comron Saifi '06 is a third year medical student at Columbia and has spent some time in Iran where he worked with others to build a much-needed hospital.*

**What made you choose Cornell?** Dr. James Bartsch, who was my academic adviser, met with me before I decided to come to Cornell. From our first meeting, it was clear that he was passionate about advising and teaching his students, and it really left an impression on me. Additionally, each student I met was quite interesting in their own unique way, but they were also well-rounded. I chose Biological Engineering as my major because I enjoy science and math, and I think that there will be many opportunities to improve society through biological applications.

### **How did the Tradition program impact your undergraduate experience? Your life?**

The Tradition program is a reflection of the university's values on work, philanthropy, leadership, athletics, and academics. The program helped solidify my own values and will always have a significant impact upon me. During my undergraduate years, the program allowed me financially to engage in biomedical research during my summers that I would have been otherwise unable to experience. Those experiences led to my interest in medical research and my future career in academic medicine.

**What did you do after graduation from Cornell University?** After I graduated, I came to Columbia for medical school. I am currently in my third year, and plan on specializing in a surgical subspecialty. My research currently focuses on congenital scoliosis and hip fractures. Additionally, while at Columbia I launched a mentoring program in an under-served area of New York City run by Columbia medical students.

**What are the major career and/or life events that have taken place since you graduated?** This past winter I spent a few weeks in Iran, where I am working with physicians and businessmen there to build a hospital in the southern city of Shiraz. As a result I plan to take a year off medical school to pursue a MPH in health care management and policy so that I can engage in this type of work throughout my career.

**What is the most rewarding aspect of your job?** Improving the lives of patients.

**Do you have advice for current students and young alumni?** Try to find a mentor in your field early on in your career. Cornell alumni are very supportive and can be a great asset to any current student or young alumni.

## Rawlings Cornell Presidential Research Scholars Alumni Profile:

### Ruth Cheng '01

*Dr. Ruth Cheng is a Senior Scientist at Boston Scientific, a major medical device company headquartered in Natick, MA just outside Boston. She leads projects developing new product concepts. Additionally, she is responsible for assessing the potential of new products or technologies for the company. Her role straddles both R&D and Strategic Planning/Analysis.*

**What made you choose Cornell?** The RCPRS program was key in my decision to attend Cornell. It represented a unique opportunity that was not available at other universities. I think my parents appreciated that Cornell is within driving distance of my hometown in Toronto too.

**How did you decide on your major?** I had an excellent Biology teacher my senior year of high school. He really helped expose me to the world of Molecular Biology and Genetics. They were areas that really intrigued me, and also I seemed to have a natural aptitude for understanding complex biological processes.

**How did RCPRS impact your undergraduate experience?** RCPRS had a profound impact. I was exposed to many different ideas, from a variety of disciplines. It was inspiring to hear about the work that other Research Scholars were doing in areas other than the Sciences. Through my undergraduate research experiences, I was fortunate to work in the labs of great Cornell faculty members, which challenged me to think and problem-solve outside the box. RCPRS also gave me the opportunity to present a poster at a major international conference as an undergraduate. *continued on page 5*

# The Cornell Commitment Alumni Profiles

## RCPRS Alumni Profile Ruth Cheng

'01 *continued from page 4*

Through that experience, I gained an appreciation for what it's like to be a part of the academic research community.

**What did you do after graduation from Cornell University?** After Cornell, I went to graduate school at the University of Michigan and obtained a PhD in Biomedical Engineering.

My thesis focused on controlling new blood vessel formation for tissue engineering. The formation of functional blood vessels is a critical hurdle in regenerating diseased tissues or organs in the body. My background fit naturally with a position as a scientist working on new therapies that combine drugs and devices for cardiovascular disease.

**What are the major career and/or life events that have taken place since you graduated.** Since I left Cornell, I moved to Ann Arbor MI for graduate school, married a wonderful Cornell alum (Livingston Cheng, '98), started a career in the medical device industry in Boston, and am now expecting a baby this May.

**What is the most rewarding aspect of your job?** I'm fortunate that I get to work with many bright individuals across many different parts of the company. I am constantly learning from the folks on the business-end about what makes a product succeed or fail. I also really enjoy the scientific discussions with others where new ideas are generated.

**What advice do you have for new professionals as they enter the work force? and/or What advice do you have for current students and young alumni?** Find a mentor or mentors; look for a good manager who is committed to helping you develop your career, and gives you opportunities to learn and be challenged.

**What do you do to unwind in your spare time?** Yoga, running, lots of cooking (I love to try new techniques), and just spending time with my husband watching 24 on TV. I also love to get-together with friends over good food and good wine.

**How do you balance work and life?** I think prioritization is key. You have to know what's important and when. Sometimes "life" comes first, sometimes work has to.

## More Alumni Updates

**Dan Macaya EN '08** writes, "I am currently a first year graduate student in the department of Health Science & Technology at MIT/Harvard Medical School. I am working towards my PhD in Medical Engineering. My research topic is in the use of injectable collagen based gels for spinal cord regeneration."

## Meinig Family Cornell National Scholars Alumni Profile: Kenneth Mark '91

*Dr. Kenneth Mark is a board-certified dermatologist with practices in the Hamptons, Manhattan, and Aspen, CO. After completing his residency, he then performed a 2 year fellowship to sub-specialize in Cosmetic Surgical Dermatology and Mohs' Skin Cancer Surgery. He is a Clinical Assistant Professor at the world-renowned NYU Department of Dermatology, where he not only completed his residency, but where he also teaches the Residents and supervises the Advanced Facial Surgery clinic.*

### Why did you choose this career path?

Surgical and cosmetic dermatology appealed to me for the artistry involved and the uniqueness of each patient with whom I work. I wanted to diversify and expand my skill set as opposed to being a general dermatologist. In addition, the impact and importance of diagnosing skin cancer early and the ability to cure it is very satisfying. I was first exposed to Mohs' surgery while doing a visiting clerkship as a medical student at the Mayo Clinic. Then, in my fellowship I had intensive cosmetic procedure training

**What made you choose Cornell?** I was pre-med and knew Cornell is amazing for science-related careers, especially pre-med. We visited some of my dad's (a teacher) former students who were pre-med and who loved Cornell.

As a NY State resident, I knew I could not beat the quality of education for the price in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. Upon visiting I quickly learned this was not only a place for a top-rated education, but also a place with a diverse student body. An added bonus was that I knew I could have a lot of fun by attending a great school that had powerhouses in hockey, lacrosse and football.

*continued on page 6*

## Meinig Family Cornell National Scholars Alumni Profile: Kenneth Mark '91 *continued from page 5*



### **What are the major highlights that have taken place in your life since you left Ithaca?**

Graduating second in my class at medical school and being accepted into the NYU Dermatology Residency program - uniformly regarded as the best in the world - are two accomplishments for which I am proud.

I have been able to start practices from scratch in the Hamptons and Aspen. I find

it personally satisfying to give back where I can. In addition to my practice, I teach at NYU and volunteer my services at the Manhattan Veteran's Administration Hospital. On a personal note, I was recently nominated for membership into the Ski Club Arlberg in Austria - the oldest and most prestigious ski club in the world.

**If you could chose another profession to be in, what would it be?** Despite the significant challenges facing medicine today, and the ever increasing rate of doctors dropping out of medicine and being frustrated, I can't think of anything I would rather do. The annual proposed medicare cuts and malpractice situation are at crisis levels, especially in certain states, and I do fear that access to care will become an even greater public health issue in the future.

**How did the National Scholars program impact your undergraduate experience?** Being a Cornell National Scholar right at the time when the program was being resurrected gave me an opportunity to interact with other students on campus who I may have never met. Membership allowed me to develop a relationship with Susan Murphy, who wrote my letter of recommendation to medical school. I am forever grateful for that. It also gave me an added level of connection to Cornell that I may not have otherwise had. I am especially proud and apprecia-

tive of all that VP Murphy has done for Cornell, and I have enjoyed witnessing her accomplishments from afar.

**What is the most rewarding aspect of your job?** Without a doubt, curing skin cancer and then reconstructing the defect after the surgery to minimize scarring is the most rewarding aspect of my job. The cosmetic aspects are also rewarding: helping patients feel better about themselves by transforming their appearance.

**Do you have any interesting stories to share about your time at Cornell?** To this day, I still get a kick out of how many people on campus perceived my fraternity as the "jock/party house." In reality, there were 5 National Scholars who were also fraternity brothers during my time there. Also, one of my pre-med peers has become my physician, my mother's, and several of my friends' physician. He is a great person and someone to whom I refer patients all the time.

**What do you do to unwind in your spare time?** I think it is key to have outlets and sources of stress relief. I enjoy the gym, skiing, and travel, and I spend quality time with friends and family as well. I have four offices and volunteer at the Manhattan V.A....even still, I ski over 50 days a year out West.

**How do you balance work and life?** This is something that I strive to get better at and at the same time, pride myself on doing. Even as a Cornell undergraduate, I worked hard and played hard! It's the Big Red way, right? Cornell National Scholars in general are leaders; very active in school, with their major, and in the community. This type of energy allows us to take on extra tasks, and excel - we live life to the fullest. That perfect balance can be somewhat elusive.

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

## Recognition Award goes to Mary Grainger

Mary Grainger '79, nominated by James Johnston of Family and Children's Services, is the 2009 recipient of the Debra S. Newman '02 Cornell Tradition Community Recognition Award. In the nomination letter, Mr... Johnston wrote, "Mary has expanded the horizons of hundreds of young girls" through her efforts with The Girl Scouts of America, Tompkins Girls Hockey Association, and the annual Sister2Sister event, which is sponsored by the American Association of University Women (AAUW).

In addition to this, she has served as fund-raiser and advisory board member for the ScienCenter, as a board member for the Ithaca Public Education Initiative, and as publicity chair for the First Congregational Church. She is a dedicated and reliable volunteer for many local non-profits including Family and Children's Services of Ithaca. She is described as a quiet, unassuming, no-nonsense leader who demonstrates versatility, reliability and follow-through. "Mary Grainger has labored tirelessly to improve the welfare of children in our community" for a number of years.

The Cornell Tradition Student Advisory Council (SAC), a group that plans and implements service projects with community agencies throughout Tompkins County, 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, a graduate of The Cornell Tradition, was a Tradition fellow who 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.

The award is presented in the spring at a community event chosen by the award recipient, the nominator, and the Tradition Office. The recipient of the award will also 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 his or her choice.

## Students travel abroad to engage in meaningful winter break experiences

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and allowable experiences have expanded from summer only to include semester and winter and spring break experiences.

This past winter break, 23 students from Tradition and MFCNS participated in a service or leadership-related experience.

One student wrote, "The support account has opened the world up to me. I was able to utilize the account over winter break to do field research and volunteer in Jamaica. I think that it's wonderful that students now have the opportunity to engage/assist in whatever area their interests lead them."

One of the additional benefits of the student support account has been the increase in student collaboration across Commitment programs. Quite a few trips involved students from both Tradition and MFCNS, working together toward a common goal.

Students participated in winter break experiences with the following organizations:

*Cover Africa: Ghana Health & Education Initiative (GHEI)*

*Jamaica Difference/Blue Mountain Project*

*Sustainable Horizons*

*Global Medical Brigades, Inc.*

*MicroChange (micro finance student group)*

*Project Kenya*

*Kwame Nkrumah University of Science (KNUST)*

*Cornellians for the Congo*

*Jewish National Fund and Israel on Campus Coalition*

*El Centro Verde*

*Foundation for International Medical Relief of Children (FIMRC)*

*El Movimiento de Mujeres Dominico-Haitiana (MUDHA)*

*Centro de Idiomas*

# 25 Years of the Cornell Tradition

*A report from Institutional Research and Planning, October 2008*

*In honor of the 25th anniversary of the Cornell Tradition program, the Office of Institutional Research and Planning and the Office of the Cornell Commitment, we would like to highlight some of the research that speaks to the program's contributions to student outcomes.*

## **Who are the Cornell Tradition fellows? A snapshot of First Year students**

Tradition fellows enter Cornell more likely than other students to anticipate a Ph.D. or an M.D. (58% versus 48%). When asked how they rate themselves compared to the average person their age, Tradition fellows were also more likely than other students to say their “drive to achieve” was in the “highest 10%” (48% versus 35%). As entering first year students, Tradition fellows were also more likely than other students to say there was a “very good chance” they would “be satisfied with this college” (65% versus 55%).

Looking four years ahead, among a group of graduating seniors heading directly to graduate or professional school, Tradition fellows were substantially more likely to be going to medical school: 24% of the Tradition fellows who were going to graduate school reported they would be pursuing an MD, as compared to just 15% of other students heading to graduate school.

In contrast, students who were not affiliated with the Tradition program were more likely to pursue a master's in engineering upon graduation: 15% did so, as compared to 8% of Tradition fellows.

Among the group of graduating seniors moving into regular employment, Tradition fellows were more likely to find employment in the education sector (19% of Tradition students, as compared to 12% of others) and in the non-profit sector (12% versus 6%). Tradition fellows were less likely to be moving into employment in high-tech business (3% versus 8%) and consulting or “professional practice” type occupations.

## **Being a Tradition fellow: Shaping the student experience**

It is to be expected that Tradition fellows are more likely than other students to report that they are engaged in volunteer work and in paid employment since the Cornell Tradition requires that students demonstrate a record of paid work and service to continue with Tradition funding. Thus, 83% of Tradition fel-

lows, but only 37% of other students report that they were spending any amount of time on volunteer work during a typical week. Similarly, 67% of Tradition fellows but only 24% of other students spent time in an on-campus job.

Because Tradition funding is based on work and service requirements in the prior year, there is no requirement that Tradition *seniors* continue in these activities. However, 75% of Tradition seniors and 43% of other seniors spent time volunteering; 80% of Tradition seniors and 26% of other seniors spent time working in on-campus jobs.

Despite differences in time spent in paid work and in service, there were no significant differences in the time spent going to class or in time spent studying between these two groups.

Additionally, Tradition students were more likely than other students to note huge gains in their leadership abilities, their ability to relate well to people from different backgrounds, their ability to function effectively as a member of a team, their career preparation, their ability to adapt to change, and their ability to formulate original ideas and solutions. Twenty percent of Tradition fellows and 13% of other students said they were “much stronger now” in their ability to “identify moral and ethical issues.”

## **The Tradition experience: The impact on graduating seniors**

Presumably because Tradition fellows tend to come from families with lower income, they are more likely than other students to graduate with some debt: approximately 83% of Tradition seniors reported some loans, compared to 55% of other seniors. However, Tradition fellows graduate with somewhat lower debt levels than do other students. A majority of Tradition fellows but less than one-third of other students are graduating with an accumulated debt of less than \$15,000.

## **An Enduring Legacy: Tradition fellows as alumni**

In 2005, Institutional Research and Planning conducted a survey of Cornell alumni from the graduating class of 1994. The multifaceted survey asked alumni about Cornell's contributions to their careers  
*continued on page 9*



## Celebrating 25 Years of the Cornell Tradition

*continued from page 8*

and other life experiences, as well as about their continuing sense of attachment to their alma mater.

Data from this survey of 10-year out alumni indicated that Tradition alumni were more likely to describe their motivation for giving as “Cornell gave me an exceptional education; I want to give back.” Further, while Tradition alumni in the survey reported slightly lower income levels than did other alumni, Tradition alumni were less likely to say that they were “not currently *able* to contribute financially to Cornell.”

The survey data are consistent with institutionally tracked data on alumni. According to data supplied by Alumni Affairs, 69% of the earliest Tradition alumni - those from classes of 1983-1989 - have made some monetary donation to the University; this compares with 55% of other alumni from that same time frame. The same pattern holds true for recent cohorts.

Data from Alumni Affairs also indicated that Tradition alumni are more likely to participate in University alumni events.

Finally, evidence from the 2005 Alumni Survey indicated that Tradition alumni also serve as leaders in their communities well beyond Cornell: they are statistically significantly more likely than non-Tradition

alumni to be leaders in political campaigns or organizations; in their own professional associations; and in religious organizations.

## 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 York 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 22, 2009.

To nominate a fellow alumna/alumnus or yourself, please submit a letter of recommendation to Stephanie Spackman, [sws36@cornell.edu](mailto:sws36@cornell.edu).

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## **OPPORTUNITY: Rotary World Peace Fellowship**

*Do you know someone who is interested in expanding their knowledge of peace building, conflict resolution, and mediation?* If you do, recommend him or her for a Rotary World Peace Fellowship. Rotary, one of the world's largest humanitarian service organizations has partnered with eight leading universities around the globe to host the Rotary Centers for International Studies in peace and conflict resolution. Each year, Rotary selects up to 110 Fellows to study peace and conflict resolution at universities around the world.

The master's level degree program is aimed at mid-career professionals in government, non-governmental organizations and private corporations. The certificate program is for professionals currently holding mid- to upper-level positions with a minimum of five years of experience in the field of peace and conflict resolution.

For more information, please visit the website at <http://www.rotary.org> or for an application, go to [http://www.rotary.org/RIdocuments/en\\_pdf/083en.pdf](http://www.rotary.org/RIdocuments/en_pdf/083en.pdf)

# The Cornell Commitment Staff Profile

## Kirsten Gabriel

**Program Coordinator for The Cornell Tradition and Associate Director of The Cornell Commitment**

*Kirsten has been on staff with The Cornell Commitment for nearly 5 years. She started out as the Assistant Director of the department, and then moved to the position of Program Coordinator for The Cornell Tradition and Associate Director of the Commitment. Kirsten and her husband Scott moved to the area in 2004 from Ohio, where she had just finished her graduate degree at The Ohio State University. Her husband Scott is in his last semester of the doctoral program in Biochemistry here at Cornell. Kirsten and Scott live in Ithaca with their young son, Isaac.*

**What is your most memorable experience working in your current position?**

When working with an RCPRS student who was pursuing a summer internship in sustainable tourism in Jamaica. It was one of the first opportunities I had to really dive in and help a student make connections, ready their application for funding, and see a dream realized. Thankfully, that was the first of many opportunities; through

this job, I'm able to have memorable experiences most every day.

**What do you find to be most rewarding about your work with the Cornell Commitment?** Generally stated, helping students, parents, and community members connect with the information and/or resources they need to get where they want to be. That can involve helping a Student Advisory Council member organize a service event, finding answers to a parent's question, assuaging the concerns of a prospective fellow, or working with a community organization to develop a Community Action Fellowship. If someone is better off or better prepared to achieve their goals after talking with me, I have done my job and been infinitely rewarded by doing so.

**How is your life with the Cornell Commitment different now than it was when you first started?**

First off, my job is different (I started out as the Assistant Director of The Cornell Commitment). The Commitment programs themselves have changed, in that we offer different programs currently than we did 5 years ago (Museum and Theater Nights and Convocation are programs that have moved on; Explore CT First-Year Experience Series, National Volunteer Week Kick-Off event, and Service Support Accounts have emerged). Current students seem just as inventive, committed, and genuine as they were when I started; I'd venture to guess that I've probably changed (read: aged) more than they have!

**What do you do when you are not at work?** Take care of my new baby boy, Isaac; experiment with new recipes and cooking techniques; hike our local trails; try the latest German games of the year and the ever-present new Ithaca restaurants.

**What are you most passionate about?** Bringing about joy - either by fostering gratitude and giving (in myself and others), or by making someone's life easier, richer, or more fun.

**If you could change one thing about your world what would it be?** Tough call - either that the right choice/decision/route would always be clear, or that listening, cooperation, compassion, and respect would be universally-held values. Or that raspberries would always be in season wherever I'm living.

**What is your most interesting/exciting life experience to date?** Being a parent.

**The Cornell Commitment Alumni eNews is published 3 times a year. To submit your updates or information or to unsubscribe from our alumni list serve, please contact Stephanie Spackman at [sws36@cornell.edu](mailto:sws36@cornell.edu).**