

COMMITMENT

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

March 2013

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ALUMNI NEWS...**

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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 Office Welcomes New Staff Members

The Cornell Commitment office welcomed two new staff members this fall, Suzanne Horning and BJ Siasoco. Suzanne and BJ are both long time student services professionals who are excited to join the Commitment staff and support the wonderful students who are a part of it.

Suzanne Horning joins the Commitment from the Residential Programs Department at Cornell. She is an Associate Director for The Cornell Commitment and the program coordinator for The Cornell Tradition. Suzanne has been at Cornell for a little more than twelve years. She previously worked as the Student Staff Development and Judicial Coordinator, where her work focused around residential student leadership and several different facets of the judicial process.

Suzanne has had prior contact with the Commitment as an admissions reader: "I had the opportunity to read at Admissions the past few years for the Commitment programs. I was so impressed with the amazing experiences that potential incoming Commitment students had already accomplished that when the position was available, I applied. I thought the Tradition Fellows would be a great group of students to work with throughout their Cornell careers, and I am excited about supporting the Tradition Fellows as they find opportunities to make an impact on the world."

BJ Siasoco, serves as the Assistant Director of The Cornell Commitment, supporting all three programs. He will be creating some new initiatives, including a service trip and a leadership development program, to further support student learning related to the values of the programs. BJ will also serve as a contact for Commitment Alumni. He is a Class of 2007 (ILR) graduate and a Meinig Family Cornell National Scholar.

Originally from Wisconsin and returning to Cornell from positions in the museum and admissions fields, he is thrilled at the opportunity to return to the Commitment office and support students the same way the program supported him: "I'm excited to bring some great new programming to both our Commitment students and alumni. I remember my mentors and fellow scholars from my own experiences in the program and I'm hoping to share those same opportunities and resources with our current students."

www.commitment.cornell.edu

Updates from Commitment Alumni



Chikaodili Okaneme MFCNS '11 is currently taking the entrepreneurial plunge and has started her own editing service. She shared her current activities and a bit about the process of starting her own business.

Where are you from?

I'm from the Bronx, in New York City. I still live here.

How do you occupy your time these days?

I started my own online editing service called Here to Edit, so I'm working on making that a full-fledged business.

How did you come up with the idea to start Here to Edit?

I've been editing for a long time so I thought it would be a good idea to turn my hobby into an actual business.

What services does Here to Edit provide?

Here to Edit accepts a wide variety of documents (essays, resumes, letters, webpages, Powerpoints, etc.) for editing. The goal is to make each submission as organized and presentable as possible. Everything is thoroughly reviewed so that customers get the helpful feedback they need to produce better quality work.

What was the biggest change for you post-undergraduate-wise?

The biggest change would be going to Colum-

bia's Graduate School of Journalism for my masters degree. My experiences at Cornell compared to Columbia were quite different, but in a good way.

Are you working in a field you studied?

Kind of, I studied Biology & Society and Science & Technology Studies so my current field doesn't focus on that directly. But those majors involved quite of a bit of writing (hence, editing) so they do somewhat apply to my field of work. I'm still interested in going into a science related field, but it would still be in an editorial role. I do work in my field of study based on my [Master's in] journalism degree though.

What do you miss most about Cornell?

I miss the beautiful and peaceful campus. Since I'm from New York City, living in such a quiet, nature-rich place was quite refreshing.

What did you love about your time as a Commitment Student?

I really enjoyed my Freshmen Form. I thought the project was quite interesting and I liked working on it. I also love how MFCNS pushed me to pursue more leadership opportunities than I probably would've taken if I wasn't a Commitment student. Those leadership opportunities were very meaningful to me, so I'm happy I didn't miss out on them.

One Cornell thing you wish you could be doing right now!

Eating Cornell Dairy ice cream!

We are looking for alumni to profile for the e-news and our social media sites.

New job? Amazing Trip? Wonderful Volunteer work? Let us know what you are up to!

Please contact BJ Siasoco '07 (bj.siasoco@cornell.edu) with anything new or exciting you would like to share.

The Commitment E-News reaches over 5000 Alumni.

Cornell Commitment Updates

Social Media Initiatives in the Cornell Commitment Office

Reconnect with your Commitment Programs

Miss the Commitment? Have you been interested in hosting a student service project? Does your organization offer a leadership training program? Are you looking to help students promote their research? We have always known our greatest strength is our fellow Commitment peers and the Commitment office is currently exploring new ways to reconnect our alumni with our current students. Do you miss working with motivated, engaging and talented Cornellians? We want your ideas, big and small, and hope you can give your time to helping the latest generation of Commitment students have an amazing Cornell Experience. Here are a few ways to help get you started:

Facebook

The Cornell Commitment is on Facebook! The three Commitment Programs have all begun to show the students and personas of our programs through our Facebook pages. Ever wonder what current Commitment students are up to? Like our Facebook pages and view regular updates on the programs. Our Facebook pages also regularly feature a spotlighted alumnus. We would love to share the real life stories of our students after they graduate.



Are you open to sharing your story with us? Please contact bj.siasoco@cornell.edu with “Alumni Spotlight” in the subject line.

LinkedIn

Connect with current students and your fellow Commitment Alumni! Some of you may remember our LINK program, launched as a way to help connect Commitment Alumni with Commitment students for mentoring and career advice. The website was generously supported by Bill Kingston and while we began to cultivate alumni and student relationships through LINK, the website was launched coincidentally with the rise of social media giant Facebook and professional networking site LinkedIn. After running the LINK website, we have decided that working within other professional social media websites would better serve our alumni and students. We are currently building our LinkedIn groups and using these online resources to provide exclusive connections between our alumni and current students.



Search for your Commitment program on LinkedIn or contact our office for a direct invitation. Alumni interested in mentoring and being contacted by current students for career insights can also be added to our Alumni Contact List.

Campus Visit

Coming to Ithaca? We are interested in meeting with you on campus! With advance notice we can arrange student round tables to connect students with similar career goals or interests with you. Please contact us if you are interested in participating in a round table when you come back to visit.

Interested in getting involved with any of these initiatives? Have some ideas of your own?

Please Contact BJ Siasoco, '07

bj.siasoco@cornell.edu

607-255-8525

Local Teacher Selected as Debra Newman '02 Award Winner



The Debra Newman '02 Award recognizes local individuals for their dedication and service to the community. The award was originally conceived by The Cornell Tradition Student Advisory Council (SAC), a group that plans and implements service projects with community agencies throughout Tompkins County.

The SAC founded the Community Recognition Award in order 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.

This year's Award was presented to Jon C. Raimon, a teacher at Lehman Alternative Community School in Ithaca, NY. Jon teaches a service learning course at the high school and has inspired many students to continue to be involved in service after graduation.



One of Jon's former students writes, "Through watching his actions, I have learned that Mr. Raimon dedicates immeasurable resources into his own service class and service projects. His willingness to give his time, energy, and care into his community service efforts makes him an exceptional example of the service learning model."

Jon was presented the award at the annual Tradition Welcome Back Dinner in January.

Nominations for the Debra Newman Award can be directed to Suzanne Horning, sah48@cornell.edu.

Annual Season of Service Expands Volunteering Opportunities

Tradition students this past December completed their annual Season of Service. This year's Season of Service saw expanded reach as Fellows went out into the Ithaca community in addition to the service projects based on campus. Over 30 fellows began at Season of Service's "Home Base" in the Founder's Room of Anabel Taylor Hall decorating cupcakes and cards for the Cornell University Police Department, Cornell University Emergency Medical Services, and the Cornell Grounds crew. In addition to these holiday treats, students created children's blankets for the Ithaca Pregnancy Center.

Because of the large number of students participating in this year's Season of Service, Fellows also assisted the Cornell Track Team with the operations of their meet (to the gratitude of Track Coach and Tradition alumnus Zeb Lang, '03) and dressed as Elves to help local children greet Santa Claus.

Tradition Fellow Brandon Taylor enjoyed seeing other Fellows working together during the Season of Service. "My favorite part of Season of Service was walking into Anabel Taylor and witnessing the camaraderie among Tradition Fellows around service. From the quilt-making to the cupcake decorating, students were passionate about what they were doing. It was uplifting to see so many energetic people working towards one goal during one of the busiest academic times of the semester. For me, that type of enthusiasm and involvement defines the true Cornell spirit."



Meinig Family Cornell National Scholars News

First Year Scholars Pilot Resilience Education Program



Building student resiliency is a growing concern amongst higher education professionals as they see their students undergo increased pressure to succeed both in and out of the classroom. Cornell's Gannett Health Services are exploring ways to work with campus students and contacted the Meinig Family Cornell National Scholars to assist with the evaluation of a course called "Student Curriculum on Resilience Education" or "SCoRE."

The SCoRE program is a research-based resilience education program that helps students cope with the personal, social, and academic challenges of college life. The curriculum was developed by 3-C Institute for Social Development and LEAD Pittsburgh in collaboration with ten colleges and universities

This year's freshman class participated in a pilot program to gauge the feasibility of presenting SCoRE to future classes of Cornellians. After going through the program, the first years divided into topical question groups and evaluated their experience in order

to provide feedback to faculty, staff, and administrators interested in this topic.

Ashely Chacon '16 described her experience with the pilot: "Being a member of the pilot group, I believe I gained a greater sense of awareness of the power we have as students. Often, students are frustrated with certain rules and/or policies existing on campus, but do nothing about it because they do not think their opinion would change anything. Being in the pilot group, I learned that if you organize your thoughts, have evidence supporting them, and present your ideas professionally, students have the power to create change at Cornell University."



Over 20 professional and faculty members attended the final presentation and sat with small groups of students over dinner for a formal presentation of the SCoRE program by the Scholars. Gannett administrators are now using the pilot group's experience and feedback to determine the viability of the program's success at Cornell.



Senior Research Round Up

by Amanda Garris

Wonder what Research Scholars are currently working on? Here are snapshots of three RCPRS Senior's current research work.



Yeow! Danger!

Sarah MacLean '13, Natural Resources

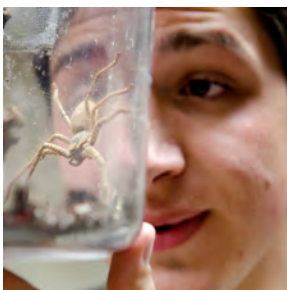
Curiosity about how birds identify potential nest predators led Sarah MacLean '13 to the rocky outcroppings of Cornell's Shoals Marine lab, where gulls nest by the hundreds. With guidance from Lab of Ornithology assistant director of citizen science David Bonter, and professor of natural resources Janis Dickinson, Sarah serenaded nesting gulls with a specialized avian playlist: the call of the bald eagles, the warning cries of two gull species, the familiar call of the local song sparrow and the novel call of the Western scrub-jay, as well as a person reading from a book. The most alarming sounds to the gulls? The human voice and the bald eagle. MacLean found that gulls not only distinguished among the different sounds, they also reacted with a gradient of agitation behaviors that suggest gulls use a finely tuned system for categorizing different types of threats.



Sizing Up Domestication Genetics

Julian Homburger '13, Biology

An avid equestrian since childhood, Julian Homburger '13 traded the stable for a lab bench to study the process of domestication in horses. Working with Nate Sutter, an assistant professor of clinical sciences in the College of Veterinary Medicine, and animal science professor Samantha Brooks, Homburger analyzed the high-resolution genomic fingerprints of 30 horse breeds to uncover the genetic relationships among them. As in many domestic animals, size in horses has been a target of selection by humans, resulting in heights ranging from the meter-tall American Miniature to Percherons twice that height. His research showed that size differentiation occurred early in the horse lineage and that there has been relatively little intermating between small and large horses since, even during the creation of breeds. The evidence suggests that horse height was an important trait for breeders well before modern times.



Size and Sprinting Spiders

Jacob Hurst '13 Entomology

Jacob Hurst '13 was ensnared in a silken thread as a first-year student in Linda Rayor's spider biology course. In Rayor's lab, Hurst's research has focused on the intersection of size, gender and speed in the Australian Huntsman spider. They are friendly with their kin, but speed is key to outrunning predators and capturing more prey. Although juvenile male and females are the same size, at sexual maturity the males have legs that are up to 20% longer than females of the same size, and Hurst evaluated the effect of this difference on their running speed. He ran a series of miniature time trials in a short acrylic tube and measured velocity, body weight and leg length in juvenile and mature males and females. Though smaller overall, sexually mature males had much longer legs, ran faster and were more "on edge" than their female counterparts, a potential advantage in escaping predators – and aggressive females!