



The College of
Arts&Sciences

Search for the Harold Tanner Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
Cornell University
Ithaca, NY

THE SEARCH

Cornell University (Cornell or University) seeks an outstanding scholar who is a collaborative and visionary leader to serve as the next Harold Tanner dean (dean) of the College of Arts and Sciences (College or Arts and Sciences or A&S).

Unique among its Ivy League peers, Cornell is a private university with a land-grant mission to discover, preserve and disseminate knowledge, to educate the next generation of global citizens, and to promote a culture of broad inquiry throughout and beyond the Cornell community. Cornell also aims, through public service, to enhance the lives and livelihoods of students, the people of New York and others around the world.

The University's research enterprise has historically been among the best in the world and has been on an impressive trajectory in recent years, capitalizing on an institutional culture that truly values interdisciplinary collaborations to fuel discovery and scholarship. Cornell's 16 schools and colleges, and 32 research centers, with roots spanning urban and rural settings, provide a unique opportunity for the work of Cornell researchers and scholars to have a broad societal impact.

The College of Arts and Sciences is home to the liberal arts at Cornell and represents the nexus of discovery and impact. With over 500 tenured and tenure-track faculty, 200 research-teaching-extension (RTE) faculty, about 300 non-academic staff, approximately 4,700 undergraduates, and 1,400 graduate students, it is the largest college by population at the University. Today, after recent record-breaking fundraising years, including the \$92 million raised in FY23, the College is thriving and embarking on exciting projects such as the \$110 million [renovation of McGraw Hall](#). Faculty recruitment and endowed

professorships have increased, a newly revamped curriculum for undergraduate students was implemented, and the College has launched several signature initiatives to enhance its teaching, research, and public engagement profile. Undergraduate applications to the College have also increased and the yield rate has hit historic highs.

Reporting to the provost, the next dean will build on the College's strong foundation and momentum. They will be a key member of the academic leadership team, partnering and collaborating with deans, vice provosts, and vice presidents to support the University's mission. They will also work with all constituents at the College to develop, implement, and advance a unifying vision while strengthening research activity, championing diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging, academic freedom, shared faculty governance, engaging and supporting students, continuing to fundraise to support projects and initiatives, and engaging locally and globally. The next dean will also work with a Dean's Advisory Council to drive strategic programming and fundraising success for the College.

Cornell has retained Isaacson, Miller, a leading national search firm, to assist with this recruitment. Inquiries, nominations, and applications, in the form of a CV and cover letter, should be sent in strict confidence to the firm as indicated at the end of this document.

CORNELL UNIVERSITY

Founded in 1865, Cornell University is a remarkable community of scholars, educators, students, staff, and alumni who are deeply influenced by proud traditions and a set of cherished founding principles including Ezra Cornell's ambition to "found an institution where any person can find instruction in any study." It is a world-class research institution known for the breadth and rigor of its curricula and an academy dedicated to preparing young people to be well-educated and well-rounded citizens of the world. Its faculty and students believe in the critical importance of knowledge—both theoretical and applied—as a means of improving the human condition and solving the world's problems. It embraces traditional liberal arts education, the practical applications of knowledge, and interdisciplinary and collaborative approaches to research and teaching. It champions free and open intellectual expression, and academic freedom, treats all individuals with dignity and respect, [celebrates difference and diversity of viewpoints and social identities](#), and promotes accessibility.

Today, Cornell consists of 16 schools and colleges. Across the main Ithaca campus, the Weill Cornell Medicine campuses in New York City and Qatar, Cornell Tech in New York City, and Cornell AgriTech in Geneva, NY, the University enrolls over 16,000 undergraduates and over 10,000 graduate and professional students. Twenty percent of these students are international in origin, representing over 130 countries. Cornell employs approximately 8,700 staff and 1,700 professorial faculty members in Ithaca and at Cornell Tech, and an additional 5,000 staff and 1,600 faculty members at Weill Cornell Medicine in New York City. Cornell also oversees the Cornell Cooperative Extension System, which has full-time staff in every county of New York state.

Cornell is home to a significant number of interdisciplinary research centers, which play important roles in helping academic units recruit and retain outstanding faculty, maintain state-of-the-art infrastructure, catalyze cutting-edge, multidisciplinary research and academic programs, and serve as springboards for partnerships. These span the physical, natural, applied, social, and biomedical sciences, engineering, and the arts and humanities. Together, they further the University's instructional, research, and public service missions in ways that push the boundaries of traditional academic structures.

For more information, visit Cornell University's website [here](#).

LEADERSHIP

[Martha E. Pollack, M.S., Ph.D.](#) is the fourteenth president of Cornell University and professor of computer science, information science, and linguistics. She took office in 2017 and has championed the realization of a vision of "One Cornell" through the cultivation of productive and meaningful synergies across disciplines and geographies, capitalizing on the complementary strengths of Cornell's urban and rural identities. She was previously provost and executive vice president for academic affairs at the University of Michigan, where she was also a professor of computer science and information.

[Michael I. Kotlikoff, V.M.D., Ph.D.](#) is provost and both chief academic officer and chief budgeting officer of the University. An internationally recognized researcher in cardiovascular biology, he is a professor of molecular physiology and was previously the Austin O. Hooey Dean of Veterinary Medicine at Cornell. His signature initiative, Radical Collaboration, recruits faculty and supports infrastructure in seven key multidisciplinary areas: genome biology, nanoscale science and microsystems engineering, data science, sustainability, digital agriculture, infection biology, and the critical inquiry into values, imagination and culture (CIVIC). Kotlikoff has also initiated efforts to invest in academic and student housing facilities, re-evaluate curricula and implement effective academic technologies, and develop policies to facilitate greater faculty diversity and dual career hiring across the colleges.

THE COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Home to the liberal arts at Cornell and the nexus of discovery and impact, the College of Arts and Sciences is composed of internationally renowned curiosity-driven scholars who engage in research and teaching in the arts, humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences. Central to its mission, the College remains focused on four essential priorities: research and scholarly excellence; academic innovation and student experience; faculty renewal and support; and public engagement, both locally and globally.

Foundational, theoretical, and basic research is a key pillar of Arts and Sciences at Cornell, with more than 100 interdisciplinary research organizations, 18 Cornell research centers, and two national research centers. Interdisciplinary work is interwoven in the College's DNA as scholars collaborate across disciplines and colleges, partnering with applied scientists and researchers to tackle the world's greatest challenges; over 30 percent of Arts and Sciences students work closely with faculty in research and independent study.

The percentage of A&S faculty submitting proposals for research grants has remained steady at almost 30% over the last few years. The multi-college departments are also critical to this interdisciplinary focus. The College of Arts and Sciences is part of the University's multi-college departments in computational biology, ecology and evolutionary biology, economics, molecular biology and genetics, neurobiology and behavior, psychology, and sociology, which foster collaboration between faculty members in these disciplines from across multiple colleges and schools. Bringing these groups together leverages common strengths, builds on distinctive strengths, and develops a shared vision that furthers excellence and elevates each discipline at Cornell.

As the largest population of the University's colleges, its faculty includes over 500 tenured and tenure-track faculty members, around 200 RTE faculty, and over 300 non-academic staff. 25 percent and 15 percent are faculty and staff of color, respectively. With 42 departments and majors, the College enrolls over 4,700 undergraduate students from every state in the U.S. and 72 countries; its faculty teaches almost 1,400 graduate students. More than 40 percent of undergraduates pursue a double major and over 30 percent of students work closely with faculty in research and independent study. The College also has a close working relationship with the [Graduate School](#), which offers research and professional degrees in nearly 100 fields of study with opportunities for further exploration in 18 minor fields.

The Arts and Sciences faculty also serves the broader Cornell community by teaching a substantial portion of the undergraduate curriculum for all other colleges at the University; of 4,000 courses at Cornell, over 2,000 are offered in the College. With 65,000 A&S alumni, the College has an active presence in numerous alumni and professional associations across the United States and around the world.

Arts and Sciences is also committed to education and research that engages both local and global communities. As a land grant university with a longstanding imperative to contribute to the greater good, an ethos of public service and engagement runs deep at Cornell. By forging community partnerships, the College is solving local and global challenges and creating knowledge to benefit humanity. The [Arts Unplugged](#) series brings research and creative works into the public sphere for discussion and inspiration; the [Distinguished Visiting Journalist Program](#) aims to recognize excellence in journalism by bringing accomplished journalists to Cornell for extended visits; the [Racism in America](#) webinar series explores research-based discoveries and potential solutions for combating systemic racism and improving equity. Additional initiatives, programs, and projects can be found in the appendix on page 9.

The College had a record-setting fundraising year in FY23, raising over \$92 million, which has helped support the long-awaited McGraw Hall renovation. This comprehensive renovation will bolster multiple strategic priorities, from supporting active learning in the classroom to faculty recruitment. Cornell follows a modified responsibility centered management budget model, and the College of Arts and Sciences' operating budget is approximately \$340 million.

More information about the College of Arts and Sciences can be found [here](#).

ROLE OF THE HAROLD TANNER DEAN

Reporting to the provost, the dean will serve as the chief academic and administrative officer of the College of Arts and Sciences. They will oversee the full range of the College's activities, attend to the College's aspirations and requirements such as determining strategies and priorities for faculty hiring, academic programs, information technology, compliance, financial and business operations, facilities, communications, and human resources. They will also be the external facing representative of the College to most of the vectors for resources, and work closely with students, staff, faculty, university leadership, donors, and alumni; they will act as a key institutional leader for the University.

Reporting to the dean are the:

- associate dean for administration
- associate dean for alumni affairs and development
- communications director
- dean's senior administrator
- senior associate dean for arts and humanities
- senior associate dean for math and science
- senior associate dean for social sciences and interdisciplinary programs
- senior associate dean for undergraduate education

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The dean will be responsible for building on recent success and charting a path forward for the College, one that energizes and unites a diverse community, meets the institution's mission, and ensures that Arts and Sciences continue to deliver an exceptional liberal arts educational experience. Given this overarching charge, the primary opportunities and challenges for the next dean include the following:

Lead with a clear, inclusive, and unifying vision.

The dean will develop, lead, support, and execute the priorities, strategic direction, and vision of the College. While they will lead the process, partnership and collegiality across the entire College community will be key to successfully realizing a common vision. The dean will champion all disciplines and offer support in the arts and humanities as these disciplines are challenged by declining enrollments across the country. They will communicate and share guideposts of the vision to all constituents. In particular, the dean will support and understand the critical work staff do for the College; they will rely on and value staff. As the leader of a college with remarkable diversity in breadth and depth of academic scholarship, they will be committed to the ongoing flourishing of all departments. Ultimately, they will advocate tirelessly for the College and all its constituents.

Collaborate across the University and beyond.

Cornell's university leadership is often described as collaborative and the dean will be expected to reinforce this collegiality by working closely with the president, provost, vice presidents/vice provosts, and fellow deans. The dean will also work collaboratively with tenured/tenure-track and RTE faculty on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to institutional advancement, support disciplinary breadth and depth, and faculty recruitment and retention efforts. The University's and College's staff are vital to the operation and success of the institution. Thus, the dean will understand the importance of working with various offices across the College and University, such as alumni affairs and development. Ultimately, they will develop trust that comes from consistent long-term collaboration and partnership across colleges and schools, units, and people.

Collaboration is critical to the success of shared multi-college departments. While these departments draw and combine financial and intellectual resources, which is advantageous and helps with faculty recruitment, operations and logistics can be improved. The next dean will bring a collaborative spirit to nurture and support these multi-college departments to realize their full vision. More broadly, the dean also has the opportunity to build deeper connections with other Cornell campuses, such as in New York City.

Strengthen research and scholarly activity and public engagement.

Curiosity-based research is at the heart of the College of Arts and Sciences and the next dean will build on the strong foundation that already exists and enhance research activity. They will support faculty members in competing for more external research funding across all disciplines and support institutes and programs that promote scholarship in the arts and humanities where external funding is not necessarily correlated with scholarly impact. The dean will also continue to support and grow the strong research programs for students that already exist.

Increasing the College's local and global engagement with diverse communities will be imperative under the leadership of the next dean. There is great interest from the Ithaca community to work and advance at Cornell and the dean will seek to develop pipelines and pathways to enable this.

Champion diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging.

Hiring, promoting, and retaining staff and faculty of color will be a priority for the next dean as well as recruiting and supporting underrepresented students at the College. They will set a high bar in terms of their commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging, and lead by example. The dean will be a moral and intellectual leader, working assiduously to extend representation, strengthen organizational culture, promote a climate where everyone can thrive, and consider curricular and co-curricular activities with an eye to DEIB.

Engage, support, and connect with students.

The College has the largest undergraduate student population at Cornell; each year, undergraduate students arrive with a keen curiosity to explore various disciplines and do not declare their major until the end of their sophomore year. Graduate students come to the University to participate in world-class research efforts that leverage the interdisciplinary and collaborative approaches in the College. Thus, the dean will understand and be a staunch advocate for the value of the liberal arts in higher education and society more broadly. They will understand the challenges graduate students face and find ways to support them. The dean will also directly engage with undergraduate and graduate students, understand student issues and opportunities, and participate in student events and gatherings. They will prioritize student-centered program development, mental health initiatives, and the well-being of all students.

Augment philanthropic support and steward resources.

The past few years have been record-breaking years in terms of fundraising, which has enabled the College to embark on exciting projects. The University is also currently engaged in a \$5 billion campaign “to do the greatest good,” which ends in 2026. The next dean will continue this momentum with a strong awareness of the current climate. They will understand the financial risks and opportunities of the College and, therefore, will be the lead decision-maker on finances, including the fundraising strategy that maps core needs such as faculty hiring/endowed professorships, scholarships/financial aid for undergraduates and graduate students, core infrastructure, flexible funds, and research support. They will have the intellectual curiosity to be an effective and strategic storyteller, and generate excitement for sophisticated donors about a wide variety of projects and initiatives.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

While no single candidate may possess all the ideal qualifications, the committee seeks candidates with many of the following qualities and abilities:

- An outstanding scholar with a deep appreciation and commitment to a liberal arts education and intellectual curiosity;
- Successful management of a complex organization within an academic setting and experience working collaboratively with other academic units;
- Track record of engaging, visible, and collaborative leadership with the ability to foster successful organizational change;
- Commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging, as evidenced by actions and achievements related to retention, workplace culture, campus engagement, community engagement, and institutional programming;
- A consultative leadership style; an excellent collaborator who can partner with other administrators, faculty, staff, and students;

- Ability to instill trust and confidence among others; and a record that demonstrates the highest degree of integrity, honesty, and fairness;
- An exceptional communicator who can inspire internal and external constituencies to attract supporters and raise funds;
- Financially astute, with experience establishing budget priorities and responsibly stewarding resources;
- Commitment to all academic disciplines and readiness to advocate for all of them, especially the arts and humanities;
- The highest degree in their field with previous university service is required. Successful candidates must qualify for a faculty appointment concurrent with an administrative appointment.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of application materials will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website for the search: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/cornell-university-college-arts-and-sciences/harold-tanner-dean>. Electronic submission of materials is strongly encouraged.

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Diversity and Inclusion are a part of Cornell University's heritage. We are a recognized employer and educator valuing AA/EEO, and we do not tolerate discrimination based on any protected characteristic, including race, ethnic or national origin, citizenship and immigration status, color, sex/gender, pregnancy or pregnancy-related conditions, age, creed, religion, actual or perceived disability (including persons associated with such a person), arrest and/or conviction record, military or veteran status, sexual orientation, gender expression and/or identity, an individual's genetic information, domestic violence victim status, familial status, marital status, or any other characteristic protected by applicable federal, state, or local law. We also recognize a lawful preference in employment practices for Native Americans living on or near Indian reservations in accordance with applicable law.

Cornell University embraces diversity and seeks candidates who will contribute to a climate that supports students, faculty, and staff to all identities and backgrounds. We strongly encourage individuals from underrepresented and/or marginalized identities to apply.

APPENDIX: College of Arts and Sciences Initiatives, Projects, and Programs

The College provides opportunities for scholars and faculty to conduct and engage with curiosity-based research via its signature programs:

[Humanities Scholars Program](#): HSP fosters independent, interdisciplinary undergraduate research in the humanities, and provides a supportive community, through a series of curated courses, structured mentorship, special programming, and research opportunities and funding.

[Klarman Fellowships](#): This premier postdoctoral fellowship program offers opportunities for early-career scholars of outstanding talent, initiative, and promise to devote themselves to frontline, innovative research without being tied to specific outcomes or teaching responsibilities.

[Milstein Program in Technology & Humanity](#): Students in the Milstein Program combine Cornell's renowned liberal arts and sciences classes in Ithaca with the 21st century tech curriculum at Cornell Tech in NYC.

[New Frontier Grants](#): These grants enable faculty members to pursue novel, bold ideas in research with potential for transformative advances in the arts and humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences.

[Nexus Scholars Program](#): This program provides undergraduate students with summer opportunities to work side by side with faculty from across the college (humanities, social sciences, and STEM) on their research projects.

[Robert S. Harrison College Scholar Program](#): The program is focused on a small group of stellar students whose interests transcend disciplinary boundaries. Students design their own interdisciplinary major, organized around a question or issue of interest, and pursue a course of study that cannot be found in an established major.

[Summer Experience Grants](#): Summer opportunities are crucial to student career success, but these life-changing experiences frequently offer little to no funding. SEG supports students with living expenses, transportation, and travel so that these essential experiences are available to all our students, who may otherwise not be able to afford them.