The Merrill Presidential Scholars

23rd Annual Convocation

Wednesday, May 25, 2011
Twelve o’clock
Memorial Room
Willard Straight Hall
Cornell University
**Introduction**
Susan H. Murphy, Vice President for Student and Academic Services

**Remarks**
David J. Skorton, President

**Presentation of Scholars**

*College of Agriculture and Life Sciences*
Kathryn J. Boor, Ronald P. Lynch Dean

*College of Architecture, Art, and Planning*
Barry Perlus, Associate Dean

*College of Arts and Sciences*
G. Peter Lepage, Harold Tanner Dean

*College of Engineering*
Lance Collins, Joseph Silbert Dean

*School of Hotel Administration*
Steven A. Carvell, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs

*College of Human Ecology*
Alan Mathios,
Rebecca Q. and James C. Morgan Dean

*School of Industrial and Labor Relations*
Harry Katz, Kenneth F. Kahn Dean

**Closing Remarks**
Susan H. Murphy, Vice President for Student and Academic Services
Douglas Merrill ’89

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**Philip Merrill A&S ’55**

Twenty-three years ago Philip Merrill A&S ’55 generously created the Merrill Presidential Scholars Program at Cornell. Mr. Merrill, who passed away in 2006, was a devoted alumnus and an accomplished publisher, diplomat, civic leader, and philanthropist. He was known for his passion for sound journalism and international affairs.

In 1968 he purchased Capital Gazette Newspapers. He led the company for five decades while more than tripling newspaper circulation. Over that same period, he maintained a vigorous commitment to public service, giving generously of his time and talents as a diplomat and financial advisor for six administrations of the federal government. He was appointed by President George W. Bush to serve as president and chair of the nation’s Export-Import Bank, a position he held from 2002 to 2005. He also served as assistant secretary-general of NATO, as special assistant to the deputy secretary of state, and as a member of the Department of Defense Policy Board.

Philip Merrill served as a trustee fellow of Cornell from 1992–1996. In 2003, he was named a presidential councilor, the highest honor the university can bestow. A generous benefactor, he strove to honor excellent teaching and enhance the quality of undergraduate studies. He considered his establishment and ongoing support of the Merrill Presidential Scholars Program to be among his greatest accomplishments at Cornell.

He was also a dedicated sailor and supporter of the Cornell Sailing Team. In 2009, Cornell dedicated the Merrill Family Sailing Center, a spectacular facility for Cornell’s sailors made possible by gifts from Philip Merrill and his family.

Cornell University is grateful to the Merrill family—Eleanor Merrill, Douglas Merrill ’89, MBA ’91, Catherine Merrill Williams ’91, and Nancy Merrill ’96—for their continued commitment to the Merrill Presidential Scholars program.
Today’s Convocation

Since 1988, the Merrill Presidential Scholars Program has formally and publicly honored Cornell University’s most outstanding graduating seniors on the eve of their graduation while also recognizing individual teachers who have played a significant role in the students’ academic excellence.

Merrill Presidential Scholars rank among the top one percent of the Class of 2011 in their respective schools and colleges. They are chosen not only because of their outstanding scholastic accomplishments, but also because they have demonstrated a remarkable intellectual drive, energetic leadership abilities, and a propensity to contribute to the betterment of society.

Because the pursuit of scholarly excellence is largely a communal effort, it is particularly appropriate that the Merrill Presidential Scholars honored today pay tribute to the teachers most influential in their development. Cornell University also recognizes the vital effect these educators have had on the academic careers of the Merrill Presidential Scholars; therefore, Cornell faculty members and the secondary school teachers selected by the scholars participate in this celebration in a dual capacity—as witnesses to the achievements of their students and as honorees who have enriched their students’ educational experiences. All have earned the admiration and gratitude of the Cornell community.

Class of 2011 Merrill Presidential Scholars

College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
Paul S. Bagi
Andrew Barnell
Michelle Fisher
Matthew Giambrone
Matthew Haber
Elise Briana Jacobs
Jimmy Lam
Shu Yang Lu
Jamie Paige Meyerson
Vishal Saggar

College of Architecture, Art, and Planning
Anuja Thatte

College of Arts and Sciences
Nathaniel Brown
Katherine Finerty
Nicole Rae Kardassakis
Kyu Seob Kim
Kyle Rifkind
Elizabeth Truax
Meiyi Amanda Wang
Dayna Jennifer Zolle

College of Engineering
Andrea Bowring
Bernard Cammarata
Eun Gi Chung
Christopher Lee Dembia
Matthew Monaghan
Madison Pearsall
Mengliang Yu

School of Hotel Administration
Robert Brewer
Ian Ratner

College of Human Ecology
Sarah Fogel
Samantha Rubin
Lin-Lin Wang

School of Industrial and Labor Relations
John I. Karin
Kimberly Kowren
The Merrill Presidential Scholars Program

Cornell’s STAR Scholarships

Established in 1989, STAR (Special Teachers Are Recognized) Scholarships celebrate the influential role high school teachers play in the success of Cornell’s Merrill Presidential Scholars. Scholarships will be named in honor of the outstanding teachers recognized today by the 2011 Merrill Presidential Scholars, and they will be awarded to Cornell students with financial need from the scholar’s high school or hometown. The late Donald Berens ’47 and his wife, Margi Berens ’47, conceived of and sponsored the STAR program. Additional support comes from the William Knox Holt Foundation through the assistance of George Malti ’61, JD ’63, a director of the foundation, and the Cornell Alumni Association of Central New York.

The 2011 Merrill Presidential Scholars and Their Honored Teachers and Professors

College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

Paul S. Bagi

Honoring Clinton Brown of the Winston Churchill High School and Gerald W. Feigenson of the Department of Molecular Biology and Genetics

Paul recently presented his original research at the 2011 SCMR/EuroCMR conference—the results of which grew from his work as a biological sciences major. He was on the dean’s list every semester, won a Dextra Undergraduate Research Endowment Fund Grant, and will graduate summa cum laude. While at Cornell, he was a teaching assistant for a biochemistry course, an undergraduate researcher in organic chemistry, and a volunteer at Cayuga Medical Center. Paul, who plans to attend medical school after graduation, spent his breaks working on research projects at the National Institute of Health.

Mr. Clinton Brown, one of my teachers in high school, has an engaging teaching style that transformed my interest in science into a passion. Mr. Brown always had high expectations for his chemistry students, and he was prepared to lead the way with a clear plan and helpful words of encouragement. Most importantly, Mr. Brown taught me it is essential to understand why things behave the way they do rather than to memorize obscure and often inconsequential facts. In addition to promoting a strong work ethic, Mr. Brown has a great sense of humor that makes everyday learning interesting and fun.

At Cornell, I was fortunate enough to take Biochemistry with Professor Feigenson, who is not only a fantastic teacher, but also an enthusiastic mentor. Professor Feigenson kept me engaged with his inclusive style of teaching, his interesting stories, and his numerous personal anecdotes. During office hours, Professor Feigenson talked about everything from current events and politics to economics and war. When you first meet him it is clear he has a genuine passion for teaching and helping students.
Andrew Barnell

Honoring Andy Abbott of the John Burroughs School and Rich Curtis of the Charles H. Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management

Andrew, who has a degree in applied economics and management with a specialization in finance, was president of Psi Upsilon at Cornell. He was also a member of the Alpha Kappa Psi Business Fraternity and the Golden Key International Honor Society. He was on dean’s list every semester, won the CALS Academic Excellence Award, was a finalist in the Class of 1886 Memorial Fund Speech Competition, and was twice a teaching assistant for Applied Economics and Management 3240. Andrew interned at Angelica Corporation and the J.P. Morgan Healthcare Investment Banking Group, which I will join upon graduation.

Mr. Abbott had a significant impact on my high school experience on many levels. He was the principal during my 11th and 12th grade years, teacher of my senior year honors English class, and also my college advisor. The English course he taught on war literature remains one of my favorite English classes to this day. But even more importantly, at a critical time in my life, as my college advisor, he provided guidance, wisdom, and perspective. I consider my decision to come to Cornell as one of the defining moments in my life. Without Mr. Abbott’s positive influence and encouragement, I do not think I would be here today or accomplished all that I have at Cornell.

From the moment I stepped into AEM 3240 at Cornell, Professor Rich Curtis had a profound impact on my life. His teaching along with the subject matter influenced me tremendously and expanded the way I would think going forward. I learned more and worked harder in his class than in any other class I have taken at Cornell. Professor Curtis’ dedication instilled in me a passion for finance and resulted in the opportunity to become a TA for his class the following two semesters. Ultimately, Professor Curtis was not only influential in terms of my education, but he also greatly impacted my career trajectory. Prior to AEM 3240 and Professor Curtis, finance was simply a course prerequisite. Now, I am leaving Cornell in a few short weeks to work on Wall Street. Professor Curtis fostered my love of finance and helped me define my goals and determine my career path.

Michelle Fisher

Honoring Mark Geren of Westview High School and Colette Waldron of the Department of Romance Studies

Animal Science major Michelle Fisher spent a semester abroad in southern Madagascar in SIT’s Ecology and Conservation program, where she conducted independent research on the cultural and socioeconomic context of forage choices by Mahafaly zebu herders. Her research was featured in World Learning’s digital collection and was nominated by Cornell Abroad for a national research award. At Cornell, she worked as a research assistant in Professor Rebecca Nelson’s maize disease resistance lab. Michelle was on the dean’s list every semester, won the American Society of Animal Science Award 2008–2010, and won the Morrison Award in 2010. She was an ESL tutor for Cornell Friends of Farmworkers, a member of St. Paul’s Methodist United Festival Chimes Handbell Choir, and a volunteer camp counselor for elementary school horse camps. She will spend her post-baccalaureate year as a volunteer with a national service organization. Afterwards, she will attend graduate school to earn an MAT for secondary science education.

When I was a sophomore in high school, I took Mr. Geren’s class on science research. A friend and I schemed to combine her knowledge of computer programming and my knowledge of chickens to create a device that could recognize different chicken vocalizations: hunger, fear, and isolation. Mr. Geren never told us we were crazy or too young; instead he taught us to ask good questions, define our variables, and write a good abstract. We won our local science fair, allowing us to travel and compete in the international science fair that year. That experience sparked a love for science and the excitement of scientific inquiry for both me and my partner. Now I’m graduating from Cornell with a degree in animal science and she’s graduating at the top of her computer science class. She’s looking for a job as a programmer, and I’m looking forward to keeping chickens again. Neither of us would be the scientists we are today without the steady support and guidance we were given by Mr. Geren during our sophomore year in science research.

In Madame Colette Waldron’s French classes, I learned quickly that Madame loved French and wanted her students to love French, too. Unfortunately for me, she expected her students to show their love of French by speaking it, in class, and frequently. As someone content to quietly take notes in the back of my large science lectures, I found this mandatory participation distressing. But over time, I learned to speak up, more closely. In the process, my French improved, I discovered a love for French film-making, and I learned how to talk to my classmates. Madame encouraged me to keep speaking French outside of her classroom, by telling me about new French movies at Cornell cinema, inviting me to Madame’s film-making, and I learned how to talk to my classmates. Madame encouraged me to keep speaking French outside of her classroom, by telling me about new French movies at Cornell cinema, inviting me to Madame’s French language dinners, supporting my choice to study abroad in Madagascar, and encouraging me to share my experiences with her classes when I came back. I hope Madame Waldron would be proud that I see my French and my ability to learn and speak new languages as some of the most useful and empowering skills I’ll take away from my four years at Cornell.
Matthew Giambrone

Honoring Lina Carman of Walt Whitman High School and Kifle Gebremedhin of the Department of Biological and Environmental Engineering

Matthew, who majored in biological engineering and minored in business, will join the life sciences consulting firm Trinity Partners after graduation. Previously, he was an intern at Bracco Diagnostics, Inc., OSI Pharmaceuticals, Inc., and BRData Retail BOSS. At Cornell, where he earned a 4.07 GPA, he was a teaching assistant for Principles of Biological Engineering. He was also a member of Theta Tau Professional Engineering Fraternity and Delta Phi Fraternity, where he has held several leadership positions.

I had the pleasure of taking both freshman and advanced placement biology with Ms. Carman at Walt Whitman High School. I entered high school with little more than a mild interest in biology, but Ms. Carman’s true passion and excitement for the subject were contagious. You couldn’t help but become interested and engaged in the topic being discussed because her teaching style made it fascinating. Through both lectures and readings her course allowed me the opportunity to learn material beyond the curriculum. And if I ever had a question Ms. Carman always seemed to know the answer. It was evident that she cared about the knowing the material, and not just to the extent necessary to teach us. I left freshman year with much more than an interest in biology. I had a true passion for it, and a craving to learn more. I couldn’t wait to take advanced placement biology with Ms. Carman, and she didn’t disappoint, only continuing to challenge me and peak my interest.

Professor Kifle Gebremedhin has served as my advisor during my tenure at Cornell, and I am very lucky to have had his guidance. No matter what the occasion, he always made me feel at home in his office, and was willing to help without hesitation. Professor Gebremedhin had my best interests in mind, and encouraged me to fill out my time at Cornell with a diverse range of experiences. He inspired me by suggesting ways to strive for further success in the field I wanted to pursue.

Matthew Haber

Honoring Joseph Warwick of Council Rock High School South and Sam Beck of the Urban Semester Program

Matthew, who will attend the New York University School of Medicine as the inaugural Jan T. and Marcia F. Vilcek Merit Scholar, earned a 4.117 cumulative GPA and pursued a course of study at Cornell in the biological sciences with a concentration in neurobiology and behavior, and he received recognition as a 2011 recipient of the Academic Excellence Award for Exceptional Academic Achievement, attaining the highest GPA within his major. One of Matthew’s crowning achievements throughout his education was his clinical research at Albert Einstein Medical Center in Philadelphia, where he developed a neuropsychological battery of tests designed to be given to stroke patients. A highlight of his Cornell years was his experience throughout the Urban Semester program, where he worked at New York Presbyterian Hospital of Weill Cornell Medical College, shadowing physicians, conducting research, and volunteering. He also worked as a teacher’s aide in a North Brooklyn High School, an experience which inspired him to found the New York City Service Initiative, a service organization that connects economically disadvantaged high school students to Cornell student mentors via the internet. At Cornell, where Matthew achieved dean’s list honors every semester, he received the A.W. Laubengayer Prize for Excellence in Undergraduate Chemistry, and was also treasurer of the Israeli-Palestinian Children’s Health Initiative. Matthew is passionate about teaching and mentorship, and has done so throughout his Cornell education, from working as a teaching assistant for introductory biology, to tutoring various students on campus. He hopes to pursue a career in academic medicine, in order to treat patients in the clinical setting, conduct research, and both teach and mentor physicians-in-training in the future.

As a student in Mr. Warwick’s high school physics class, I had the privilege of learning from a teacher who cared deeply about teaching his students. However, it was not just the excitement that Mr. Warwick had, or the humor he injected into each of his classes that inspired me, but it was the way he transformed how I learn. Mr. Warwick encouraged me to solve problems cooperatively, and I took this to heart. I learned from him not to hoard knowledge, but to share it among friends by learning and discussing physics in groups. I had begun to learn by teaching others, and I have carried this with me throughout my college education. Both Mr. Warwick’s enthusiasm for teaching and his encouragement towards helping others have inspired me to incorporate teaching into my future career as a physician.

Professor Sam Beck’s Urban Semester Program at Cornell greatly enhanced my professional development by enabling me to immerse myself in the worlds of medicine and community service learning. Sam encouraged me not only observe what I was seeing during my time in New York City, but to take an active role. I learned to look at my interactions with people from all walks of life through a sociocultural lens, allowing me to understand human interactions beyond my own personal perspective. Furthermore, Sam encouraged me to incorporate the concept of service to others into my actions, and I will continue to do so not only during my career practicing medicine, but throughout how I live my life.
Elise Briana Jacobs

Honoring J. Bradford Anderson at Trinity School and Sahara Byrne of the Department of Communication

Elise, who graduates with a major in communications and a minor in applied economics and management, spent a semester at the John Cabot University in Rome, Italy. At Cornell, she was on the dean’s list every semester and received the Chi of Delta Gamma Alumni scholarship. She belonged to the Ho-Nun-De-Kah Honor Society and the Lambda Pi Eta Honor Society. She held leadership positions within the CALS Alumni Association Board, the Association for Women in Communications Cornell Chapter, and Delta Gamma Sorority. Elise was a writer for the Slope Media Group, a peer advisor in the communication department, and a CALS ambassador. During her breaks, she had a number of internships at organizations including Draftcb Healthcare, Fox 5 News, Elle Magazine, and the Clinton Foundation.

In my 11th grade English class, Dr. Bradford Anderson immediately fostered an environment of comfort and intellect, where students could speak their minds. I was eager to participate in discussions and engage in debate. English became my favorite subject as he challenged us to build our vocabulary, enhance our reasoning ability, and develop our creativity. He introduced unique books and subjects into the Trinity School curriculum, such as an elective on New Orleans literature after Hurricane Katrina. All of this encouraged my love for reading, writing, and engaging in discussions, which is why I decided to become a communication major.

Upon commencing Professor Sahara Byrne’s class “Media and Human Development” at Cornell, I identified with her passion for media and was captivated by the materials she used from current events. Professor Byrne challenged me throughout my academic career and harnessed my creativity with projects like an advertising platform for a moldable shoe I designed. I will always appreciate her for entrusting me with positions that required responsibility and leadership, such as being a Research Assistant in the Media Effects Lab for two semesters, as well as being a Teaching Assistant for her course Media Communication. Professor Byrne constantly kept me engaged in her course material, encouraged me to think outside the box, and led me to seek out opportunities in media and marketing. As I begin a marketing consulting role with The Nielsen Company in July as a Professional Services Analyst, I am thankful to both teachers for providing me with the skillset and confidence to succeed in the workforce.

Jimmy Lam

Honoring Ani O’Brien of Paul D. Schreiber High School and Martha Stipanuk of the Division of Nutritional Sciences

Jimmy gathered a great deal of international experience while a student at Cornell, including summer internships for ProWorld in Peru and Brazil and attending a three week bioethics conference in Bangkok, Thailand where he also shadowed physicians at the Yanhee International Hospital for Reconstructive and Plastic Surgery. Jimmy, who majored in nutritional sciences with a concentration in molecular nutrition, was the executive director for the student organization Cornell Health International, founded a chapter of MEDLIFE (Medicine, Education, and Development for Low-Income Families Everywhere) at Cornell, and initiated a microfinance program for low-income women of Cebadas, Ecuador. He was a member of the Mortar Board National Honor Society for Leadership, Scholarship, and Service and was named an American Diabetic Association Foundation Scholar in 2010. Jimmy was a teaching assistant for biochemistry, organic chemistry, and physics, did independent research in the lab of Professor Martha Stipanuk, received research funding from the Dextra Undergraduate Research Endowment Fund and the Morley Student Research Fund, and worked as a National Institute of Health Summer trainee under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

My high school teacher, Mrs. Ani O’Brien, inspired me to explore molecular biology. In her class, I relished and was spellbound by her chalk drawings of the simplest molecular building blocks of life. Her patience, candor, and reception towards my vexing questions have continued to shape my college experience every day. In high school, my sister had hamsters that replicated ad infinitum. Eager to spread interest in biology, Mrs. O’Brien adopted and accommodated three of the hamsters within the classroom. The most important lesson that I learned from her class was to critically analyze and question information. Without the supportive environment Mrs. O’Brien provided, my academic endeavors in college would have revolved around rote memorization.

Later, I would continue to draw on these inspirations at Cornell where I was gifted with my academic advisor, professor, and mentor, Professor Martha Stipanuk. Enrolling in her graduate course, Proteins and Amino Acids, and having the opportunity to work in her laboratory enabled me to link my interests in pathology with molecular biology. Professor Stipanuk was also my “go-to” person. When an errant campus computer had consumed my 12-page lab report for another class, Professor Stipanuk was the first person I went to for support; when I was stuck in Ithaca for Thanksgiving, Professor Stipanuk invited me to her family gathering; and when I felt especially garrulous, Professor Stipanuk held onto her breath. With her guidance, I realized the breadth of my career direction.
Honoring John Bjorkman of North Rockland High School

Shu Yang Lu

Dr. Tudorita (Doina) Tumbar has been my professor and research mentor for the last four years, during my entire undergraduate education at Cornell. While at Cornell, I spent more time in her lab than any place on campus. What I most appreciate about Dr. Tumbar was her belief in my desire and capabilities to conduct research when I was merely a freshman. Out of twenty some e-mails I sent out to professors, Doina was the only professor who expressed interest in having me work in her lab. At that time, I was already grateful that I had the opportunity to work in a lab that was conducting cutting edge stem cell research. I was shocked when I learned that I was going to have my own project and conduct independent research. Through my interactions with her, I learned immensely about science and research, which profoundly shaped my experiences in Cornell as well as my career goals. I am grateful to have Doina as my mentor and even more grateful for the advancements she helped me make in my career.

While an undergraduate, Shu Yang published a paper in Molecular and Cell Biology. He studied biological sciences and was a member of Ho-Nun-De-Kah, the Golden Keys International Honor Society, and Alpha Zeta Fraternity, from which he received the Jeffrey DeGumbia Scholarship. He was a student advisor for Biological Sciences, a CALS student tutor, and spent a winter break in China volunteering as an English teacher and health clinic assistant. Shu Yang plans to attend medical school after graduation.

When I was first told that I could nominate one of my high school teachers who made important contributions to my life, I began to have flashbacks of all the teachers I had during my four years in North Rockland High School. Out of all of those good, bad, or average teachers, I would have to say that Mr. John Bjorkman was undoubtedly the most influential teacher that I have had. “Mr. B” was my orchestra director for all four years in high school, but to his students and me, Mr. B was also our mentor and counselor. Even on the day of a concert, when the string and the wind section was unable to properly play the first movement of Schubert’s “Unfinished Symphony,” Mr. B would still take time out of the class period to try to relate our efforts of learning to play this seemingly impossible piece of music to important life lessons. Although my days of playing solo passages in Corelli’s “Concerto Grosso” or playing vibratos in Barber’s “Adagio for Strings” are slowly fading, Mr. B’s lessons of passion, compassion, work ethics, and dedication are deeply ingrained in me. For this, I am truly honored to have had Mr. Bjorkman as my teacher and mentor.

Jamie Paige Meyerson

After graduating, Jamie will join Deloitte Consulting’s Strategy and Operations practice in New York, NY, on her way to an eventual MBA. While working towards a Bachelors of Science in communication and a minor in business at Cornell, Jamie achieved honors including dean’s list and the 2011 Academic Excellence Award for exceptional academic achievement in the communication major. Funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, she also conducted research within the department of communication looking at the social determinants of health and the effects of health messaging on the childhood obesity epidemic. She was also a senior news writer and night editor for The Cornell Daily Sun, a Communication Peer Advisor, and a member of both Lambda Pi Eta National Honor Society and Kappa Delta Sorority. Jamie spent a semester abroad at the University of Westminster in London, England. She has interned with IBM Global Financing and Systems and Technology Group, in addition to the strategic communications firm Burson-Marsteller.

Beyond the interesting subject matter, my high school teacher Jeff Konis’s “Government and Politics” class directly parallel my own interests and career goals. His coursework and research in health, his work with the Securities and Exchange Commission and top law firms brought a unique perspective to class, as we debated issues ranging from the death penalty to the electoral system. What I appreciated most about his teaching style was his availability outside of the classroom, where he was always willing to talk to students or provide guidance. This insight has extended beyond my high school years, as I continue to reach out to him for advice on careers and future plans.

Having taken two classes with Professor Niederdeppe here at Cornell, in addition to conducting research with him for the past year, he is the professor that has made the strongest impact academically on my college career. Given his work in health communication and social determinants of health, his coursework and research directly parallel my own interests and have allowed me to pursue them both inside and outside of the classroom. Planning Communication Campaigns is one of the most useful classes I’ve taken at Cornell, giving me both the practical and group work experience needed in the real world. Working with Professor Niederdeppe has also involved me in unique undergraduate research opportunities, adding another important aspect to my education. His continued support and advice is greatly appreciated.
Vishal Sagar

Honoring Matoula Lykos of Half Hollow Hills High School East and Timothy J. DeVoogd of the Department of Psychology

Through his actions as a professor, scientist, and Jefferson Science Fellow, Dr. DeVoogd has shown me the importance of collaboration with one’s peers, at both the local and international level. From my conversations with Dr. DeVoogd both in and outside of the lab, I have gained life lessons that I will employ throughout my career in medicine.

Vishal, who majored in biological sciences, will attend the New York University School of Medicine next fall. While at Cornell, he was a member of the Ho-Nun-De-Kah Honor Society and the Golden Key International Honor Society. He was on dean’s list every semester and won the Robert C. Byrd Honors Scholarship. Along with his extensive research for Dr. DeVoogd, he was also a teaching assistant for a biology course and a resident advisor. In his senior year, Vishal was given the Academic Excellence Award for Biological Sciences and selected as a degree marshall for CALS.

When I began high school, both my brother and sister told me to befriend Ms. Matoula Lykos. My siblings commented on Ms. Lykos’s caring attitude and unique ability to incorporate humor into her lesson plans. I quickly discovered Ms. Lykos’s dedication to students and love for mathematics inside the classroom. At the same time, it was outside of the classroom, through our frequent conversations during my free periods, which led to Ms. Lykos having a lasting impact on my development. One conversation still stands out in my mind: As I was talking to Ms. Lykos about her profession, she said, “The day I stop enjoying what I do will be the day that I retire.” Ms. Lykos’s words serve as inspiration for me to always pursue my interests and achieve my goals.

At Cornell, Dr. Timothy DeVoogd has served as both an educator and mentor for me over the past two years. He has taught me to not only analyze scientific experiments in a more critical manner, but to also consider the implications of results within the broader community.

Anuja Thatte

Honoring Richard Driskill of Deerfield Academy and Michael Tomlan of the Department of City and Regional Planning

Anuja, an urban and regional studies major, wrote an honor’s thesis on gender inequity and disaster management, with specific focus on the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and its management process within Tamil Nadu, India. She is a member of the National Society of Collegiate Scholars, the Golden Key International Honor Society, and was on dean’s list every semester. She worked with the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage in Pune, India, the READ Foundation in New York, NY, the Ithaca Youth Bureau’s Literacy Corps, and the UCLA Institute of the Environment in Thailand. Anuja, who will be attending law school next year, served as the Vice President of Education of Kappa Alpha Theta sorority, Community Outreach Chair of the Organization of Urban Studies, and volunteered with the Charlotte County, FL Homeless Coalition. She was also a staff writer for Slopemedia Online Magazine and was a coxswain for the Cornell Women’s Novice Crew team her freshman year.

My high school teacher Dr. Driskill probably does not remember this, but during one particularly memorable discussion of Toni Morrison’s Beloved in his senior English elective, as my classmates and I struggled with our own problematic relationships to the legacy of slavery, he cleared his throat and said simply, “We are more than what divides us.” That moment captures how, in his gentle but vigorous way, Dr. D. helped me to understand that my scholarly position is a privilege that carries with it inescapable responsibility to not just see but to bridge the gaps between people from which injustices stem.

It was with this sense of myself as both a reader and writer of society that I applied into the Urban and Regional Studies major at Cornell, a program that encourages its students to think and act critically about the complex, inequitable forces informing any social context. Professor Tomlan, who has served as my academic and thesis advisor over the past year, unrelentingly pushed me to pursue an exit project that is far bigger than myself, always somehow managing to make my work seem both feasible and important. His guidance was invaluable throughout the processes of writing my thesis and applying to graduate schools. Dr. Driskill and Professor Tomlan have challenged me to make the most of my educational opportunities and moreover, given me the confidence to do so; I feel so lucky to have the opportunity to honor these teachers without whom I would not be who and where I am today.
Nathaniel Brown

Honoring Benjamin Johnson of the Hampden Academy and Annetta Alexandridis of the Department of History of Art and Visual Studies

One highlight of Nathaniel’s time at Cornell was his experience conducting research in the dendrochronology lab, where he analyzed pine tree-rings from Cyprus. Another highlight was his year abroad in Paris with the EDUCO program. Nathaniel was a French major and College Scholar, and was on the dean’s list all semesters. He is a member of Phi Beta Kappa and the Golden Key National Honor Society. He is an accomplished rock climber, and was an instructor for Cornell Outdoor Education. He was also a member of the Cornell Abroad Student Outreach Team and the French Society.

Mr. Ben Johnson took over the Latin program at Hampden Academy in 2002 with 50 students. By 2006, the Latin program had expanded to more than three times that size with 170 students. This, I can honestly say, is entirely thanks to Mr. Johnson’s teaching ability and passion for the language. I took Latin all four years of my high school career, and Mr. Johnson motivated me and promoted critical thinking every step of the way. During my senior year, a few of my fellow students and I would spend our study hall period in Mr. Johnson’s classroom, naming it “AP Life” because of our discussions on subjects in and out of the classroom. Whether it was supervising me for an independent study in Ancient Greek or prodding me to look into Cornell for college, Mr. Johnson truly inspired my intellectual pursuits, and I would not have been here today without his guidance.

During orientation week of my freshman year at Cornell, I eventually found the office of my freshman advisor Professor Annetta Alexandridis. Since it was her first year at Cornell University, we figured out the labyrinthine process that is course enroll as a team, both new to the system. This collaborative relationship is what I value most about Professor Alexandridis. Though she is my advisor for my honors thesis project, meetings with Professor Alexandridis make me feel more like her intellectual colleague than her student. Not only are Professor Alexandridis’s classes in the history of classical art enriching, but they also foster open discussions and set the stage for analyses of sources and materials. Professor Alexandridis is an inspiring academic role model who has taught me to study sources with a critical eye. I am grateful that she was always there to encourage me in my studies at Cornell.

Katherine Finerty

Honoring Robert Meredith of the Dalton School and Cheryl Finley of the Department of History of Art and Visual Studies

Graduating with a degree in history of art, Katherine is a member of Phi Beta Kappa and will be a Name Banner Bearer for the College of Arts and Sciences at 2011 Commencement. She spent the majority of last year in the UK where she received First-Class Honours at the University of Cambridge and studied at the Sotheby’s Institute of Art in London during the summer. Along with her studies, Katherine has explored her interest in art history through a summer internship at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and her role as Vice President of the Cornell History of Art Majors’ Society in which she co-curated an exhibition at the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art. After graduation, she will intern at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in the Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas curatorial department during the summer, and The Studio Museum in Harlem during the fall. In the future Katherine plans to return to London and pursue a history of art Masters focusing in contemporary African art, curating, and museum studies.

Without my Dalton School teacher Robert Meredith and Cornell professor Cheryl Finley I truly wouldn’t be who I am today: an ambitious student inspired by the power of art and my own voice. Having loved art from a young age, I eagerly registered for my high school’s Art History elective taught by Mr. Robert Meredith. He took us to the Metropolitan Museum of Art once a week, where I discovered that art is never something to merely look at, but to think about, interact with, and fully experience. I will never forget the day I read Rob’s evaluation of my work, in which he candidly encouraged me to pursue a career in this field. His belief in my ideas has been the greatest driving force in transforming my personal passion into an educational focus, and achieving a voice through which I can truly express myself.

Eager to pursue the history of art major at Cornell, I attended Professor Cheryl Finley’s seminar “Exhibiting Cultures” my sophomore year. I was instantly instilled with the ambition to study and empower African Diaspora Art through Cheryl’s perspective of exhibition spaces as progressive sites for diversity. Cheryl has inspired me a great agency to contribute to a forward-thinking discipline that truly reflects the diverse perspectives comprising our nuanced cultural reality. I am honored to have the opportunity to thank Robert Meredith and Cheryl Finley for providing me with not only an open-minded educational foundation, but more importantly, the courage to believe in myself and the power of art.
Nicole Rae Kardassakis

Honoring Karalyn Ramon of Notre Dame Academy and Michael Goldstein of the Department of Psychology

Nicole received an Einhorn Discovery Grant to support her senior honors thesis research on toddler language acquisition, and in April 2011 she presented her findings at the Society for Research in Child Development meeting in Montreal, Canada. She has been on the dean’s list every semester, and is a member of the Golden Key International Honour Society, the Psi Chi International Honor Society in Psychology, and the Phi Beta Kappa Society. She held leadership roles in the Alpha Xi Delta sorority, the Society of Women Engineers, and Encourage Young Engineers and Scientists. After graduation, she will attend Harvard Law School.

For me, it was Mrs. Ramon in high school science—she taught two of my three science courses, biology and physics. Between these two classes, she taught me many lessons, but two of them stand out above the others. During a multi-week experiment on genetic mutations, my partner and I immediately identified what our mutation was; Mrs. Ramon patiently explained that we still needed to conduct the experiment, so we did. Five years later, I still remember this experiment, not because our guess was right, but because of what this taught me: even when you can skip steps, the experience you gain is more important than just finishing. Mrs. Ramon also instilled in her all-female pupils a love for the sciences and showed us that women can succeed in this field.

I met Professor Goldstein a few years later when I was in the midst of transitioning into the psychology program at Cornell. He surprised me; not only is he famous for teaching robots and rats in a child development class, but he also expends countless hours mentoring undergraduate and graduate students. Professor Goldstein has patiently helped me through classes, law school applications, research, and self-doubt. Every time I was frustrated with a stubborn subject or my lack of results, Professor Goldstein encouraged me to persist. He taught me to keep going despite difficulties and that, if you are going to do something, you need to do it right. These two remarkable teachers have not only encouraged and shaped my academic career, but also my personal growth.

Kyu Seob Kim

Honoring Yuriy Bashkatov of the Korea Science Academy and Aaron Wagner of the School of Electrical and Computer Engineering

Kyu Seob, who plans to attend graduate school after graduation, spent summer 2009 as a researcher at the Weizmann Institute of Science in Israel, focusing on applied mathematics and computer science. He has been on the dean’s list every semester, and won first place for the Freshman Math Prize. Kyu Seob has been a resident advisor for two years and also travelled to Colombia and Russia during school breaks.

Growing up in South Korea, I never had a teacher who was Russian. However, my high school had a sister school in Russia, and they decided to invite a physics teacher to come for a year. I remember the day when I was in the auditorium listening to Mr. Yuriy Bashkatov talk about how he was excited to be here. He taught a physics class, and I was impressed by his passion for physics. He was always in the lab doing something and showed me interesting results that I could not even find in textbooks. I started to enjoy doing physics experiments and having conversations with him about Russian culture and what he thought about Korea.

During this very important period in my life, Mr. Bashkatov both taught me physics and broadened my perspective.

On the first day of ECE 3100 at Cornell, I was in class thinking “I’m only here because it is required.” However, when Professor Aaron Wagner walked in and started to motivate us, it sounded very interesting. His lecture was so clear that I did not even read the book. At the end of the semester, he convinced me to go into communication and networks, a branch of electrical engineering related to ECE 3100. Because of his influence on me,
Kyle Rifkind

Honoring Joy Woollen of Rolling Meadows High School and Sarah Kreps of the Department of Government

Kyle, who will attend Stanford Law School next year, double majored in economics and government. While at Cornell, he was a member of the Quill and Dagger Senior Honor Society, Phi Beta Kappa, the editorial writing board of the Cornell Daily Sun, and was a political cartoonist for the Cornell Progressive. Kyle, who is also a Meinig Family Cornell National Scholar, held leadership positions with the student organizations Social Business Consulting, Ashoka Campus Changemaker Initiative, and the Sigma Phi Society Oliphant Distinguished Lecture Series. During his summers, he was a researcher with Professor Kreps, an education division intern at the Federal Justice Center, and an extern for Federal Judge Wayne Andersen.

I distinctly remember my first day of high school Advanced Placement English Language with Mrs. Woollen. After providing us with an overview of the class, Mrs. Woollen gave me what she thought was her first piece of wisdom—curry favor from your superiors. She asked the class which course had been our favorite of the first day of school, and while everyone else said it was hers, I chose Advanced Placement Statistics. As a result, I not only became a far better writer and analytical thinker, but I also gained a friend that I deeply respect and admire.

Elizabeth Truax

Honoring Dan Bixler of Santa Ynez Valley Union High School and James Maas of the Department of Psychology

Elizabeth Truax, who majored in economics and was a member of the varsity track and field team, has distinguished herself by twice being named to the 400 Club as a student athlete who achieved a perfect GPA. She has appeared on the dean's list, was a teaching assistant for Psych 1101 for three years, and was a member of the Alpha Kappa Psi Business Fraternity and the Sigma Tau Delta sorority. She was a member of Dr. Maas's writing staff for his most recent book, Sleep for Success!, and studied abroad at University College London. Elizabeth, who interned with Liz Claiborne, Inc. and GE HealthCare, will join the Bank of America Merrill Lynch after graduation as an equity capital markets analyst.

A good teacher inspires students to strive for greatness in the classroom, but an outstanding teacher inspires students to strive for greatness both inside and outside the classroom. Although I thoroughly enjoyed both my high school physics class with Mr. Dan Bixler and my Cornell psychology course with Dr. James Maas, what I've learned from these two teachers has largely affected me outside of the classroom. As a coach of my high school cross country team, Mr. Bixler taught me to set ambitious goals and chisel away at the obstacles in front of me one day at a time. When I was the slowest person on my team and set a goal of making the regional meet, instead of laughing at me, he instilled in me the confidence and work ethic necessary to go on to become a state ranked runner. Through his leadership, I developed into a person who won't quaver in the face of doubt.

When I came to Cornell, Dr. Maas filled that same mentorship role. In addition to providing me with numerous research and teacher's assistant opportunities over the past four years, he has constantly challenged me to improve myself. Every time I meet with him, he begins prodding me: “What are you doing to be a leader?” “What steps are you going to take next?” “How are you giving back to the community?” Dr. Maas has encouraged me to always keep both eyes on my future, and also to make sure that future is one that gives back to those around me.
Meiyi Amanda Wang

Honoring Ron Shapiro of the WT Woodson High School and Vivian Zayas of the Department of Psychology

Meiyi, who is also a Milstein Scholar, was a double major in psychology and biology and society. Her 4.19 GPA has earned her a spot on the dean's list every semester, and she is a member of Phi Beta Kappa. Meiyi worked as a research assistant in Vivian Zayas’s Personality, Attachment, and Control Lab where she participated in two different studies. In her spare time, Meiyi played clarinet for the CU Winds, played intramural volleyball, and was a member of the service fraternity Alpha Phi Omega and the Biology and Society Department’s Education Policy Committee. After graduation, Meiyi plans to spend a year doing research at a university psychology lab while applying for graduate school in developmental psychology.

Up until my sophomore year of high school, I had never received anything below an A on an English assignment. Then I met Mr. Shapiro. Hoping to defy the rumor that “everyone does bad on the first essay,” I spent hours on my analysis of Jean Valjean from Les Misérables, only to get the paper back with a menacing D glaring back at me. In retrospect, I suspect that the appallingly low grades were part of Mr. Shapiro’s devious plot to convey the importance of a strong assertion sentence. Countless drafts later, my final product looked nothing like the original, thanks to multiple revisions and Mr. Shapiro’s training in the art of the assertion. I never imagined such painstaking effort could be put into crafting a single sentence, nor that a sentence could convey such depth of meaning, but throughout the year we practiced writing and rewriting. Of course, I was used to teachers demanding multiple revisions and Mr. Shapiro looked nothing like the original, thanks to countless drafts later. My final product seemed quite impossible.

Before I began working with Professor Vivian Zayas in her Personality, Attachment, and Control Lab at Cornell, I wasn’t sure where my psychology major would take me. Of the two most common paths, clinical and research, research always seemed the least likely for me. I just couldn’t see myself cooped up in a bleak laboratory all day (being inexperienced, this was the naive image I had in mind). Working as a research assistant with Professor Zayas, however, is one of the college experience that has made me sure about my long-term goals in psychology. While some undergraduate RA positions consist of the mere odds and ends of simple tasks, Professor Zayas makes her research assistants crucial components of the lab. For me, being immersed in an intellectual atmosphere was key in realizing how much I relish discussions about experimental findings and research methods. This was only possible because Professor Zayas encouraged her RAs to attend and participate in lab meetings with the faculty and graduate students. Now, as I plan for a future of continued research and a graduate degree in psychology, I am grateful to Professor Zayas for providing me with the inspiration and motivation to pursue a path that once seemed quite impossible.

Dayna Jennifer Zolle

Honoring Karen Gerlich of Arapahoe High School and Erin York Cornwell of the Department of Sociology

Dayna, a triple major in American studies, government, and sociology with a minor in law and society, was on the dean’s list every semester of her Cornell career. She is a member of Phi Beta Kappa, Pi Sigma Alpha (the political science honors society), and received the Robert C. Byrd Honors Scholarship. During her Cornell in Washington semester, Dayna interned at the U.S. Supreme Court in the Office of the Clerk. She has also interned at Colorado Legal Services, Rose Community Foundation, Colorado Nonprofit Association, and Safe Shelter of St. Vrain Valley in Colorado. At Cornell, she held leadership positions with Cornell Student Wishmakers, William Keeton House, and Community Partnership Board. She was a member of Alpha Phi Omega (a national service fraternity), the Society for Women and Law, the Cornell Chorale, and the Red Carpet Society. She will attend law school after graduation to train for a career in public interest law.

My high school teacher, Ms. Karen Gerlich, is an incredible educator. In her Advanced Placement U.S. History class, she assigned each student to serve as an “expert” on particular readings, teaching us to unpack the texts by reading critically and identifying the most important details. Ms. Gerlich posed challenging questions, demanding a deeper exploration of the texts and their historical implications. She taught me how to think critically, how to orally express my ideas, and how to write clearly and effectively. Ms. Gerlich’s teaching style benefited me tremendously in college, and I am confident that the skills she taught me will greatly benefit me in law school and beyond. Finally, Ms. Gerlich is truly a friendly and gracious person, whose passion for U.S. history inspired me to continue studying American government and society.

At Cornell, I took Professor Erin York Cornwell’s “Sociology of Law” class as a sophomore, and I asked her to be my honors thesis advisor because of her clear passion for the subject matter. She has been a wonderful mentor to me. Despite being a busy professor, she is always more than willing to meet with me, often presenting me with readings that she sought out specifically for my research. She is also very supportive, trusting me with flexibility and independence when I need it, but always urging me to continue making progress and expecting high quality work. Finally, she took the effort to get to know me as a person as I completed the law school application process.
College of Engineering

Andrea Bowring
Honoring Peter Kaczmar of Lower Merion High School and Darrell Schlom of the Department of Materials Science and Engineering

In her junior year, Andrea, a major in materials science and engineering, won the James L. Gregg prize for the most outstanding MSE student. In her senior year, she won Engineering Learning Initiatives Undergraduate Research Funding. Her 4.01 GPA placed her on the dean’s list every semester. She worked as a researcher in the Ulrich Wiesner Group and spent a summer as an intern for General Electric. Andrea, who plans to attend graduate school in materials science and engineering, also was co–principal violinst of the Cornell Symphony Orchestra, treasurer of the Cornell Women’s Ultimate Frisbee team, and a member of the Women in Material Science and Engineering Club.

I had the great fortune to be in Mr. Peter Kaczmar’s class for three years in high school because I had been in a small advanced math group since sixth grade. With hand-crafted problem sets and exams that often went beyond what we’d done in class, Mr. Kaczmar continually fostered our mathematical independence and curiosity. After calculus my junior year, I looked forward to taking his senior math seminar. Rather than follow a standard curriculum, we got to explore a range of topics, including number theory and statistics. Through his classes, I came to feel comfortable with and excited about a huge variety of mathematical topics.

At Cornell, I had the pleasure of taking two classes with Dr. Darrell Schlom and having him as my advisor. He is a wonderful lecturer, but my favorite teaching technique of his was structuring his thin film class as a semester-long project. Even I was surprised at how much I enjoyed the challenge of devising an optimal method to make a novel thin film structure. As an advisor, he constantly tried to help figure out what I wanted and needed even when I wasn’t sure myself. When I returned from a frustrating summer internship, he shared with me stories about people he knew working in industry with degrees at various levels. This helped me realize that I wanted to pursue my PhD. Throughout my career here, Dr. Schlom has provided me with crucial support in everything from choosing classes to creating an independent study.

Bernard Cammarata
Honoring Timothy McPartlin of Algonquin Regional High School and Kifle G. Gebremedhin of the Department of Biological and Environmental Engineering

One high point of Bernard’s Cornell career was a summer research internship at the Lahey Clinic in Burlington, MA. The result was a published paper in the Journal of Urology. At Cornell, he majored in biological engineering and was on the dean’s list every semester. He led the Genetically Engineered Machines project team and has been a peer advisor for the College of Engineering. He was also a teaching assistant in BEE 3310. Before attending medical school, Bernard plans to spend two years working as a researcher.

When I was a freshman in high school, attending Mr. McPartlin’s world history class was the highlight of my day. Either he was the best teacher I ever had, or all of my other teachers weren’t very good. At the beginning of every class, we would ask him questions about his life in the military, in order to delay the start of lecture as long as possible. Mr. McPartlin is a smart man and although he clearly knew what we were doing, he would still grant our request and tell us stories about fighting rattlesnakes in the desert or surviving boot camp. Through his short anecdotes, Mr. McPartlin emphasized the importance of life experiences and the fact that everything cannot be learned in a classroom.

By my junior year at Cornell I completed all my general engineering courses, but I was puzzled by how the mechanics I had learned tied into biological engineering. When I took a class with Dr. Gebremedhin, my questions were soon answered. I remember when he seamlessly tied fluid mechanics into the cardiovascular system by demonstrating the effect of high blood pressure on the work done by the heart. Dr. Gebremedhin taught me that engineering principles can be applied to biological concepts, and this realization will help me immensely when I attend medical school.
Eun Gi Chung

Honoring Ryan Tyler of the Holderness School and Paat Rusmevichientong of the School of Operations Research and Information Engineering

Eun Gi, an operations research and information engineering major, was on the dean's list every semester and was named an Engineering Global Fellow. At Cornell, Eun Gi was a teaching assistant for ORIE 3120 and an AguaClara Outreach team member. Eun Gi gathered international experience as well, including internships with Accenture, Samsung Life Insurance in Seoul, Korea, volunteer work at a public school in Nepal, and with Harvest Mission International in Kazakhstan. After graduation, Eun Gi will join the Investment Banking Division of Nomura.

As a foreign student attending an American high school, I had to adjust to a new, alien environment. During this somewhat difficult time, I met Mr. Tyler, who became my math teacher and ski coach for three years. In every interaction we had, he always encouraged me to do better. In class, he emphasized working in a group, which created common ground amongst students of different backgrounds, many of whom eventually became very close friends of mine. On the slope, he challenged me to be fiercer and to overcome my fears. We also had a lot of fun in our annual dress-up ski competition when our team spirit thrived.

Studying at Cornell was another adjusting period that I had to go through. Being an engineering student, I had a difficult time interacting with professors and other students because often, the class was simply too big. In Professor Paat’s class, however, it was different. Similar to Mr. Tyler, he emphasized learning from other students through team efforts and respected every student’s unique learning styles. I chose to study Operations Research Engineering without knowing much about the major, but from his class I could understand how OR was applied in the real world and why statistics was much valued. These two mentors have given me not only the confidence to excel in the new challenges ahead but also the physical, academic, and personal foundations from which to build upon after graduation.

Christopher Lee Dembia

Honoring Scott Segal of Roslyn High School and Geoff Recktenwald of the Sibley School of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering

Christopher placed first in his class of fellow mechanical engineering majors. He received the McManus Design Award for an automated data analysis tool he developed for Professor Tom Avedisian’s lab. Christopher, who hopes to attend graduate school in mechanical or nuclear engineering, has been a teaching assistant in a mechanical engineering class and a tutor and Matlab consultant in a computer science class. He was vice president of the ASME student chapter and a subteam leader on the Solar Decathlon team. In summer 2010, he had a co-op placement with GE wind turbines. He was also the Toshiba-Westinghouse Research Fellow at Penn State.

Mr. Segal’s Advanced Placement English course was known to be one of the most difficult courses in our high school. The class was a transformative step along my path from being an average student to one of the top students in my class. That year, I found that I could apply myself to levels previously unfamiliar. The practice of teaching writing is often simplified to providing suggestions such as “avoid semicolons.” What has been valuable about Mr. Segal’s teaching is that somehow he instilled a mindset of rigor into my writing that I carry with me today. Also, I still try to mimic the beautiful capital block letters that he used exclusively when writing on the board.

At Cornell, I have had the pleasure of doing research with Dr. Recktenwald throughout the year. Our weekly meetings are always enjoyable and energized, with quick back-and-forths of questions and ideas. I’ve barged into his office to ask him for advice more frequently than
Matthew Monaghan

Honoring Steven Delorenzo of North Hunterdon High School and Charles Williamson of the Sibley School of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering

After graduating, Matthew will be working for the consulting engineering firm Simpson, Gumpertz & Heger, where he previously held an internship. At Cornell, he was on the dean’s list every semester, achieving an overall 4.09 GPA. He was a Meing Family Cornell National Scholar, completing 150 service hours each year, and won an Engineering Learning Initiatives Research Fellowship in 2010. He held leadership positions with the Landmine Research Project, the Robotics Lab, and is in the process of co-authoring a publication on wind energy. For the engineering school, he was a teaching assistant, a peer advisor, and an academic excellence workshop facilitator.

No one was a bigger part of my high school community than Mr. Delorenzo. He was that rare individual who was known to everyone and respected and admired by all. As a coach of two sports teams, he demanded the best out of his teams; as organizer of the school blood drives, he made sure we donated more blood than anyone in the state of New Jersey; as guidance counselor, his door was always open, and he always waited with a handshake, a smile, and a “I’m going to do everything I can, including leap through a wall in order to help you’ attitude that made trips to his office inspirational. In my life, his ability to motivate, provide reassurance, and spread his infectious enthusiasm has been unmatched.

There are many great lecturers at Cornell, but there are few great teachers. Professor Williamson is the latter. It was never enough for him to simply present the material; every day he made his best effort to share his intense passion for fluid dynamics and ensured we walked away from class having learned something. Be it through watching Top Gun, playing Beatles music, or firing a vortex cannon, he always found innovative ways to teach us and inspire us to learn the material. Savant-like in his knowledge of fluids, he challenged himself by researching vertical axis wind turbines. As part of his research team, I was inspired by the energy and zest he brought to this new endeavor and his ability to stay positive in the face of adversity.

Madison Pearsall

Honoring Anne Allaman of Lyons Township High School District 204 and Paat Rusmevichientong of the School of Operations Research and Information Engineering

Madison, who majored in information science, systems, and technology, is a standout scholar-athlete. In academics, she is a member of Cornell’s 400 Club for student-athletes who achieve at least one semester with a 4.0 grade point average, was Athletic Chairperson of the Red Key Athletic Honor Society, and received the Richie Moran Award for a senior who distinguishes herself through academics, athletics, and ambassadorship. As a gymnast, she was an NCAA Regional qualifier, a six-time USAG All-American, and ESPN The Magazine Second-Team Academic All-America selection. Madison was the gymnastics team’s top scorer in the floor exercise during the 2011 season. As co-captain of the Cornell Varsity gymnastics team, she was also a four-year starter for the Big Red, holding the third-highest all-around score in Cornell history. Madison was twice a first-team academic all-district pick after earning USAG All-America honors on uneven bars in 2010. She was ECAC Female Gymnastics Scholar Athlete of the Year in 2010. She also participated as a coach and mentor to girls in Cornell’s National Girls and Women in Sports Day celebration. During her time at Cornell, Madison held internships at MGP Wealth Management and The Nielsen Company. After graduation, she will join McKinsey & Company as a business analyst.

My high school history teacher, Ms. Anne Allaman, was the first teacher I had who truly persuaded me I could become whatever I wanted to be, and, more importantly, that I should because tempus fugit (time flies). She has a passion both for her students and for learning that is contagious. History was never my favorite subject, but for a period of time she had me completely convinced that I should be an archaeologist, something that would make my friends laugh today.

While Ms. Allaman made me confident I could be anything, it was my first class with Professor Paat Rusmevichientong at Cornell that made me consider a future in consulting, a field I will now be entering upon graduation. This particular course taught me the value and power of simple information, a concept I found very fascinating. Paat greatly influenced my interest in the subject matter. I admire him so much for the way he runs his courses; in what can often become a daunting engineering schedule, Paat has a way of lifting the stress from students. It’s amazing how much simple things like providing coffee to an early morning midterm can raise one’s morale. Paat genuinely cares for his students, both in and out of the classroom. He demonstrated curiosity and appreciation for my life as a student and as an athlete, as well as for my future, and I greatly respect him for his efforts to get to know me.
Mengliang Yu

Honoring Liubo Zhu of Shanghai Yan’an Senior High School and James Shealy of the School of Electrical and Computer Engineering

Mengliang, who is already working on his masters of engineering degree in financial engineering, earned a 4.148 overall GPA in his undergraduate degree in electrical and computer engineering. In 2009, he won the John G. Pertsch Prize for highest junior GPA in ECE. At Cornell, he was chief financial analyst of the Behavioral Economics and Finance Organization, treasurer of the ETA Kappa Nu honor society, and participated in Cornell’s Into the Streets volunteer program. He held internships with ICBC, HSBC, and Standard Chartered Bank—all in Shanghai.

Mr. Zhu was my high school physics teacher and he was the head teacher of our class as well. I enjoyed lectures given by Mr. Zhu because I could learn not only physics but also learning methodologies from him, which he regarded much more important than the knowledge itself. In each lecture, instead of sticking to formulas and axioms, he talked a lot about the right way to learn textbook knowledge. Even now, some of the methodologies I learned from Mr. Zhu are still very helpful to me. I remembered Mr. Zhu said on the commencement day: “graduation is not the end but a new start for you. I hope what you learned from me will benefit all your life.”

Professor James Shealy has been my academic advisor for three years since I transferred to Cornell. He helped me get used to the life here by giving me a lot of beneficial advice, including helping me make academic plans and select courses. I took Microwave Engineering with Professor Shealy, from which I learned some of the most advanced microwave technologies. I will never forget those days as the methods and knowledge I learned from Professor Shealy helped me to build a wide platform, which enables me to reach numerous possibilities in my future life.

Robert Brewer

Honoring Rhetta Bayne of Beaufort High School and Stephani Robson of the School of Hotel Administration

Robert, who majored in hotel administration and minored in real estate, was ranked second in his class. He won the SHA Writing Excellence Award for his paper on medical tourism, and also the Gertrude Spencer Writing Award. He was a teaching assistant for five different classes, president of Ye Hosts Honorary Society, co-president of Cornell Elderly Partnership, and was a member of the Hotel School Ambassadors. While at Cornell, Robert held internships with Jones Lang LaSalle Hotels, Juno Development, and the Ritz-Carlton Amelia Island. After graduation, he will join Ernst and Young in New York, NY in their transactional real estate/hospitality division.

Although calculus is a daunting subject for most high school seniors, Mrs. Bayne was able to make it both approachable and fun. In addition to her notable passion for mathematics, which made a difficult subject enjoyable, what I truly appreciate about Mrs. Bayne was that she was a teacher I could confide in. As a student who wanted to achieve, my peers looked down upon me at times. However, Mrs. Bayne was a teacher I could turn to; we had many laughs with each other. I never knew a math teacher could be so witty. She made my high school experience a much more enjoyable one.

Coming to the Hotel School, I knew I had a passion for hotel development. Taking my first course on this subject matter with Dr. Robson certainly did not disappoint. Throughout my time in her class, I was drawn to her enthusiasm for hotel development. From the interesting projects she assigned, including analyzing hotel architectural plans to providing an analysis of medical tourism, I decided by
Ian Ratner

Honoring Jennifer Newitt of the Friends Academy and Richard H. Penner of the School of Hotel Administration

I have taken advantage of the School of Hotel Administration’s professional development opportunities and had three very prestigious internships in the field of real estate finance, with Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld, LLP, Broadwell Consulting Services of the Aphotorp, and H. Thomas O’Hara Architect, LLP. These experiences prepared him to enter New York University Law School in fall 2011. At the School of Hotel Administration, he ranked first in his class and was a member of Ye Hosts Honor Society. He was a teaching assistant for several courses in business computing and finance and a board assistant for Hotel Ezra Cornell. His undergraduate research covered topics including medical tourism, the impact of training programs at high end restaurants, and analyses of the real estate market. Ian was also a member of Sigma Alpha Mu Fraternity, the Hospitality Law Society, and participated with Into the Streets.

I first met Mrs. Newitt in her role as vice principal at Friends Academy, my high school. She always had her door open to help students, but I really got to know her as a senior in her Advanced Placement biology class. From the onset, I was anxious about the challenging course, though calmed by Ms. Newitt’s expertise and friendly demeanor. Whether it was with her daily reading quizzes or rigorous tests, Mrs. Newitt encouraged us to truly envelop ourselves in the material. But these exams aside, Mrs. Newitt always found a way to capture our interest. On one hand, our biology class was exactly like one would imagine it to be: we took a trip to the Bronx Zoo, studied fruit flies, and constructed intricate models to illustrate mitosis. On the other hand, Mrs. Newitt did far more than simply “go through the motions.” I still remember vividly giving presentations on bizarre animal mating rituals on Valentine’s Day. Mrs. Newitt knew how to mix challenging material with an enlivening learning environment. I appreciate Mrs. Newitt because she furthered my desire to learn and showed me the rewards of academic intensity.

I came to know Professor Richard H. Penner in and out of the classroom during my first semester of junior year. He was the instructor of my Hospitality Facilities Design course. In this course, Professor Penner’s dedication was by far the most inspiring component. Unlike many professors, he maintains an open door policy—a policy of which I took great advantage. If I needed help clarifying ideas for a floor plan, or even a recommendation for law school, I never hesitated to stop by Professor Penner’s office. With all of his thoughtful assistance, I also found myself more comfortable in class, which encouraged me to challenge myself. Coupled with his sense of humor and unwavering mastery of facilities design, Professor Penner’s ability to make me feel confident in my facilities design skills, and also in my capabilities overall, undeniably shaped the remainder of my time at Cornell.

Sarah Fogel

Honoring Richard Hodum of Half Hollow Hills High School East and Tamar Kushnir of the Department of Human Development

Sarah, who graduated in December 2010, is currently a human resources coordinator for Polo Ralph Lauren. While at Cornell, she earned an overall 4.03 in her human development major, and was on the dean’s list every semester. She is a member of Kappa Omicron Nu Honor Society and Psi Chi International Honor Society in Psychology. She received grants from the Human Ecology Alumni Association and Kappa Kappa Gamma. As laboratory manager of the Early Childhood Cognition Laboratory, she recruited and managed research assistants, among other duties. She was also a research assistant at the Yale University Department of Psychology, Health, Emotion, and Behavior Laboratory, a peer counselor for Empathy, Assistance, and Referral Services, and a career assistant for the College of Human Ecology Office of Student and Career Development. She spent a semester abroad at La Universidad de Sevilla in Spain.

At my high school, Señor Hodum taught Advanced Placement Spanish—not the class, but rather the experience. I looked forward to the forty minutes a day in which my world transformed into a hub of language, culture, cuisine, and history. He was the kind of teacher who created a safe space. It was the only classroom in the entire school where it was okay to be 18 years old and sing aloud about irregular tenses, paint the walls, and recite original poetry. I remember Señor Hodum as the single teacher who challenged me to confront my greatest academic frustrations, as opposed to solely nurturing my strengths. His homework was the homework that kept me up all night (ask any of his students), but I never doubted my ability to excel. I fell in love with the language, graduating with the confidence to thrive not only in college level courses, but also abroad in courses at the University of Seville.

At Cornell, Professor Kushnir will forever be known as the first professor to expose me to my greatest enemy: the essay test. Sophomore year, I spent more hours in her office than either of us could have realistically afforded, but that is how our bond was strengthened. She not only exposed me to subject matter outside my comfort zone, but also aided in my navigation of the material. Giving up was never an option. Above all, Professor Kushnir trusted me, and so I trusted myself; the following year, I was facilitating the discussion sections for the very same course. Her greatest influence, however, was far beyond the realm of the classroom/laboratory environment. I will remember her for her guidance and life lessons as I contemplated studying abroad, interviewed for jobs, and ultimately made the choice to graduate early and start a career. I owe her many thanks for keeping me grounded and reminding me that nothing is out of reach.
Samantha Rubin

Honoring Linda Gerbosi of East Meadow High School and Rosemary Avery of the Department of Policy Analysis and Management

Samantha focused her research, internships, and service on children in need. As an undergraduate research assistant for Professor Rosemary Avery, she worked on a program evaluating foster children. As an intern for Lawyers for Children in New York, NY, she met with clients at foster homes and residential treatment facilities. As an intern in the Nassau County Family Court, she observed family court proceedings. She volunteered with Prevent Child Abuse America. These opportunities led her to her goal: attending law school. Samantha, who majored in policy analysis and management, was on the dean’s list every semester and earned an overall GPA of 4.0. She is a member of Kappa Omicron Nu, the National Society of Collegiate Scholars, and has been given the Robinson Award. She is also a member of the Sigma Delta Tau sorority.

Upon learning of my acceptance to the Cornell class of 2011, the first person I wanted to inform was Mrs. Gerbosi, my high school guidance counselor. She was a source of encouragement throughout the application process and I greatly appreciated her support. Her helpful nature has guided me towards my current success and has fostered confidence among many other East Meadow High School students. I am thankful that she traveled all the way from Texas to join us today and celebrate this award. Fortunately, soon after I began my studies at Cornell I met another inspiring role model.

Taking Professor Avery’s course at Cornell, “Introduction to Policy Analysis and Management,” was a rewarding experience. The class is centered on real world applications, a feature that was previously lacking from my academic career. Not only was I studying current policy issues, I was also suggesting well-researched solutions to them. Though the workload was demanding, the analytical skills I gained from the course provided me with the tools necessary to succeed in subsequent classes. Furthermore, Professor Avery’s supportive demeanor helped to create a calm environment amongst a population of typically anxious students. Thanks to Professor Avery’s encouragement and the class’s practical basis, I felt empowered to apply my new skills outside the classroom setting. I applied to be a research assistant and was hired to work on Professor Avery’s family policy projects. For the past three years, I have been studying foster children under the guidance of Professor Avery. We are currently analyzing foster youth in South Africa. The work we have done has inspired me to intern at various agencies that assist foster children. Professor Avery’s compassion for her students is unmatched. I am grateful for her constant support, and I hope to have similar positive learning experiences when I continue my studies at law school. While I will certainly miss our weekly research dinners, I look forward to continuing our friendship after graduation.

Lin-Lin Wang

Honoring Anne Sanelli of East Brunswick High School and Ardyth H. Gillespie of the Division of Nutritional Sciences

Lin-Lin has been an avid contributor to the Cornell, Ithaca, and global communities throughout her college career. As a freshman, she joined the Circle Kiwanis International service organization; she was elected the treasurer, and later the Kiwanis Family Relations co-chair. She spent the spring of her junior year studying abroad in Cape Town, South Africa, where she volunteered and focused on improving the nutritional status of HIV-positive mothers and children at the Mfuleni HIV/TB Clinic and the Ubuntu Africa Child Care Center. At Cornell, she participated in research with Professor Gillespie’s Family Food Decision Making group, and conducted independent research on changes in Cornell students’ food roles. She also had a summer research position with the Center for Advanced Biotechnology and Medicine in New Jersey. Lin-Lin has been on the dean’s list every semester and was a member of the National Society of Collegiate Scholars, Kappa Omicron Nu Honors Society, as well as the Golden Key International Honor Society, in which she became the vice president of finance for a semester. She was an orientation leader, a first aider in her hometown’s EMS squad, and a regular volunteer at the Ithaca Pregnancy Center. Lin-Lin hopes to eventually become a primary care physician specializing in family medicine.

Advanced Placement Biology was the highlight of my junior year of high school. Learning was never dull in Mrs. Sanelli’s classes because of all the interesting labs, group projects, and other activities that she prepared. Mrs. Sanelli excelled at explaining difficult concepts, and established a solid foundation that helped me succeed in biology courses at Cornell. She was also my advisor for the Waksman project, which allowed high school students to engage in complex science research. With her guidance, I was able to grow as a researcher. Mrs. Sanelli fostered in me a love for science and especially human biology, which later became an important factor in my decision to pursue a career in medicine.

During my sophomore year of college, I joined Professor Ardyth H. Gillespie’s Family Food Decision-Making group. Professor Gillespie’s advising style is truly commendable in that she stresses independent thinking. Her method of approaching a problem is very applicable and transcends research; I feel that I’ve become better at evaluating my options instead of jumping to a conclusion. Professor Gillespie is not only a great active listener, but she is also a very personable and open-minded individual. She genuinely cares about how everyone in the group is doing, and has supported me in pursuing my other interests as well, such as studying abroad in South Africa. I am especially grateful for all the help I received from these two special people and would like to thank them for their inspiration, advice, and passion in what they do.
John I. Karin

Honoring Walter Gordinier of McQuaid Jesuit High School and Samuel Nelson of the Department of Labor Relations, Law, and History

John’s academic accomplishments helped him achieve dean’s list every semester as an industrial and labor relations major. He was a member of the top policy debate team for the Cornell Forensics Society. Additionally, he was selected for the Cornell Tradition Fellowship as a freshman. John, who plans to attend law school upon graduation, interned for the Honorable Charles J. Siragusa of the U.S. District Court for the Western District of New York and for U.S. Senator Charles E. Schumer.

My best teachers influenced both my personal and academic development. When I first walked into Mr. Gordinier’s room in my high school, it was not for class. He was the head of the history department, and I was sent to his room because I was a know-it-all freshman who did not know when to give the other teachers a break. Instead of scolding me or attempting to quash my precocity, Mr. Gordinier encouraged me to channel my inquisitive nature into asking constructive questions and respectfully listening to the responses. I later used this method in his American history course, and elsewhere, to great effect. To me, a great teacher not only conveys interesting information in a better-than-tolerable manner, but a great teacher also fosters in students a desire to learn. Whether it was by investigating primary sources, relating the material to current events, or discussing views from across the historical-political spectrum, Mr. Gordinier more than met this ideal.

I first met Assistant Professor Sam Nelson when I was in tenth grade and took a summer debate class that he taught at the University of Rochester. Through a couple twists of fate, we both ended up at Cornell. During my first week at Cornell, I found myself in Kennedy Hall listening to the same life story Sam employs as a pedagogical tool (by now, I have heard this story at least five more times). Aside from teaching the fundamentals of debate, Sam’s class was simply entertaining, almost like educational standup comedy. As our head debate coach, Sam also helped teach me to care about more than just my own success and to become a better team member. Altogether, I continue to work at perfecting the lessons Mr. Gordinier and Sam taught me. Both teachers helped make me the individual I am today and will continue to influence my choices in the future.

Kimberly Kowren

Honoring Jane Berger of the Department of Labor Relations, Law, and History

Kimberly, who majored in industrial and labor relations, is a candidate for graduation with honors, was on the dean’s list every semester, and won a Clem Miller Summer Scholarship.

While at Cornell, she volunteered with the Immigrant Farmworkers’ Initiative, tutoring laborers in English. She has held internships with the Office of Legislative Affairs in the Office of the Governor of Georgia, and with Morgan Stanley. Her senior honors thesis is titled “Contemporary Denunciation of Second-Wave Feminism: A Juxtaposition of Third Wave Feminist and Conservative Critiques.”

Prior to taking Professor Berger’s “Radicals, Reformers, and Reactionaries—Politics and Protest in 20th Century America” class at Cornell, I held political and social opinions that I considered virtually immovable. After only a few short weeks in Professor Berger’s class, however, I was surprised to find that, through the class’ thorough, extensive, and enormously thought-provoking discussion, nearly every assumption I had so deeply held was challenged. Professor Berger always encouraged us to examine an issue from a different, often contrary, perspective; she pushed us out of our comfort zones and transformed us all into much more analytical thinkers. As I completed my honors thesis, she continued to help hone my investigative and analytical skills. Perhaps most importantly, she has given me the confidence to plainly voice my opinions—as long as I could sufficiently support those opinions through analysis—in both group discussion and writing. I enter the professional world vastly more knowledgeable, inquisitive, and self-assured because of Professor Berger.