Working at Cornell

President's Awards for Employee Excellence

The Employee Excellence Awards were established in 2011 to recognize the achievements of staff who excel in their roles, both in skills and performance. The program was renamed the President's Awards for Employee Excellence in 2018, and updated with redefined categories and criteria to expand the program's scope to all staff and faculty in all roles, while highlighting the cultural elements that make working at Cornell so special.

Trustee Awards are also presented to outstanding nominees from across the categories.

Awardees will receive recognition points through Cornell's Employee Recognition portal, and all nominees are invited to a ceremony with President Pollack, Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer Christine Lovely, and senior leaders from across campus.
This year's nomination cycle is now closed. Thank you.

A recording of the Excellence Awards 2022 event is coming soon! Click here to check out photos from our event held on Tuesday, November 15

The Game Changer Award

In a Nutshell: Recognizes an employee who developed, implemented, or tried a new approach, system, or idea.

Keywords: Innovation, Creativity, Fresh

Overview and Criteria

Innovation and a bold, creative approach are vital to higher education – so it is imperative to recognize and reward innovation throughout the organization. This award has been created to recognize employees – whether they have been at Cornell for a few weeks or many years – who bring fresh ideas to their work, inspire a spirit of innovation, and take a bold approach to accomplishing their work. Nominees can work in any area on campus. They can be a colleague, a manager, an employee, someone you have worked with on a project or team – or even yourself. We want to show that innovation flourishes at Cornell!

Your Game Changer nominee should possess these essential Skills for Success:

- COMMUNICATION: Shares knowledge and information.
- JUDGMENT: Demonstrates innovation, creativity, and informed risk-taking.
- GROWTH: Creates environments in which employees have the freedom, tools, or resources to challenge the status quo, push boundaries and achieve growth; uses mistakes as opportunities for learning.
- INITIATIVE: Seeks advancements in products, processes, services, technologies, or ideas.
- VISION: Finds innovative solutions; sees new possibilities; takes new ideas from concept to reality.

We also encourage you to explore and incorporate one or more of Cornell’s Core Values into your nomination:

- Purposeful Discovery
- Free and Open Inquiry and Expression
- A Community of Belonging
- Exploration across Boundaries
- Changing Lives through Public Engagement
- Respect for the Natural Environment

Nomination

What we’re looking for: Here is your chance to tell us about an employee that has demonstrated, implemented, or tried a new approach, system, or idea in the last year. Consider the criteria above and use the Skills for Success to inform your response. We would also suggest including one or more Core Values to improve your submission.

Examples:

- Perhaps the nominee works in IT support and inspired a bold approach to overhaul a work process in order to adapt to remote or hybrid working conditions, while accomplishing the necessary results.
- Or perhaps they provide front-line customer service in dining and had to respond efficiently and effectively
to implement a significant change in working conditions.

- Maybe your nominee works in facilities, at the vet hospital, or in-patient care and demonstrated resiliency by continuing to respond with innovative solutions amidst a continuously changing environment.

- **Group Nomination**: If you know others who would like to nominate this individual, you may do so as a group by adding the additional nominators’ names and net IDs to the online nomination form. Additional information may be requested of these individuals as part of the review process.

- **Self-Nomination**: If you would like to nominate yourself for this award category, please provide the names and Net IDs of 2-3 individuals who can support your application.

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**The Mission-Possible Award**

**In a Nutshell**: Recognizes an employee whose work demonstrates excellence in supporting the university’s core mission of learning, discovery, engagement. This staff member will exemplify going above and beyond to complete a mission.

**Keywords**: Impactful, Excellence, Learning-Discovery-Engagement

[accordion]

**Overview and Criteria**

The Mission-Possible award is presented to Cornell employees who have exhibited a positive and influential impact on their work environment, overcome an obstacle, or fostered cooperation and collaboration in their workgroup, while carrying out their responsibilities.

**Your Mission-Possible nominee should possess these essential Skills for Success:**

- **INTEGRITY**: shows a strong work ethic and stays focused on what is important; takes on the tough challenges.
- **GROWTH**: produces results under challenging circumstances and changing environments; sets and achieves stretch goals for themselves.
- **INITIATIVE**: looks for opportunities to take initiative and/or exceed expectations; strives to do work more efficiently and effectively; volunteers and enthusiastically takes part in university events and programs.
- **VISION**: looks for opportunities to grow their skills and knowledge for the betterment of their team and the University; a positive team player in the department or work group.
- **JUDGMENT**: invested in the university’s success; an ambassador for the university as an employer.

We also encourage you to explore and incorporate one or more of Cornell’s Core Values into your nomination:

- **Purposeful Discovery**
- **Free and Open Inquiry and Expression**
- **A Community of Belonging**
- **Exploration across Boundaries**
- **Changing Lives through Public Engagement**
- **Respect for the Natural Environment**

**Nomination:**
1. **What we’re looking for:** Please tell us about a staff member whose work demonstrates excellence in supporting the university’s core mission areas of learning, discovery, and engagement. Consider the criteria above and use the [Skills for Success](#) to inform your response. We would also suggest including one or more [Core Values](#) to improve your submission.

   - **Examples:**
     - Perhaps your nominee is a front-line worker and provided a consistent level of high performance, despite transitioning to new operation requirements or parameters.
     - Maybe the nominee had to entirely reassess or re-implement a long-standing project in order to adapt to new or changing circumstances.
     - Perhaps another nominee is a project manager that had to quickly assess emerging needs and completely redesigned and implemented a mission-critical program.

2. **Group Nomination:** If you know others who would like to nominate this individual, you may do so as a group by adding additional nominators’ names and net IDs to the online nomination form. Additional information may be requested of these individuals as part of the review process.

3. **Self-Nomination:** If you would like to nominate yourself for this award category, please provide the names and Net IDs of 2-3 individuals who can support your application.

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**The ONE Cornell Award**

**In a Nutshell:** Awarded to a team, department/section or group of employees that implements a project or solves a problem that positively impacts Cornell and the greater community.

**Keywords:** Teamwork, Collaboration

**Overview and Criteria**

“We need to become One Cornell,” – Hunter R. Rawlings III, Cornell President Emeritus

Cornell’s mission to discover, preserve and disseminate knowledge depends on collaborative efforts. The Cornell community is constantly growing and challenging us to continue to improve means to effectively work across technologies, cultures, and boundaries. The collaboration can be within or across teams, departments, units, divisions, or campuses. The collaboration can be within or across teams, departments, units, divisions or campuses.

**Your ONE Cornell nominee should possess these essential Skills for Success:**

- **INTEGRITY:** A positive, honest, and diplomatic when working across teams, departments, and cultures.
- **INCLUSIVE:** Creating a sense of belonging can be especially challenging in a truly diverse work group, and requires showing respect, openness, compassion, and empathy for others even in difficult situations. In addition, serving as an ally when others are being excluded.
- **VISION:** “One Cornell” means to effectively integrate the work of our campuses and programs in NYS, the US, and globally. Sharing this means embracing change, having long-term vision, and supporting bold ideas.
- **COMMUNICATION:** Nominees must have exceptional listening skills, the ability to clearly share their knowledge—both written and verbal, in a manner that is inclusive for all participants.
We also encourage you to explore and incorporate one or more of Cornell’s Core Values into your nomination:

- Purposeful Discovery
- Free and Open Inquiry and Expression
- A Community of Belonging
- Exploration across Boundaries
- Changing Lives through Public Engagement
- Respect for the Natural Environment

Nomination:

1. **What we’re looking for:** please tell us about a team, department or group of employees that have implemented a project or solved a problem that positively impacts Cornell and the greater community. Consider the criteria above and use the Skills for Success to inform your response. We would also suggest including one or more Core Values to improve your submission.
   - **Examples:**
     - Perhaps they responded to an urgent need on campus and quickly formed an ad-hoc team to deliver needed results such as facilities teams that helped with campus reopening efforts, welcoming students back, or coordinating campus wide efforts to keep the community safe.
     - Or maybe they were members of a large project committee that rolled out a University-wide solution via a platform or system.
     - Maybe this work team, such as a building care, dining hall or laboratory testing group, delivered a particularly public or heroic effort this past year.

2. **Group Nomination:** If you know others who would like to nominate this group, you may do so as a group by adding the additional nominators’ names and net IDs to the online nomination form. Additional information may be requested of these individuals as part of the review process.

3. **Self-Nomination:** If you would like to nominate yourself for the ONE Cornell category, please provide the names and Net IDs of 2-3 individuals

4. **There is no size limit for group nominations. Please be aware that due to time considerations we may not be able to name each individual in the group at the awards ceremony.**
community to contribute and participate fully. Nominees who are supervisors go the extra mile to create a culture of belonging in their teams and the larger organization.

**Your Culture of Belonging nominee should possess these essential Skills for Success:**

- **INITIATIVE:** employee who takes the lead, regardless of their job title or level, to help others feel that they belong at Cornell.
- **INCLUSION:** Exceptional efforts to promote a workplace environment free from bias and discrimination, where all individuals are valued.
- **JUDGMENT:** Addresses areas of need and commits to progress and achievement—not because their job requires it but because it is the right thing to do.
- **INTEGRITY:** Aims to involve and incorporate others; establishes high standards for personal conduct.
- **VISION:** Receptive to new ideas, information, backgrounds, and experiences.

We also encourage you to explore and incorporate one or more of Cornell’s **Core Values** into your nomination:

- *Purposeful Discovery*
- *Free and Open Inquiry and Expression*
- *A Community of Belonging*
- *Exploration across Boundaries*
- *Changing Lives through Public Engagement*
- *Respect for the Natural Environment*

**Nomination:**

1. **What we’re looking for:** What we are looking for: Here is your chance to tell us about an individual who goes beyond expectations to create and support an open, inclusive, welcoming, and equitable workplace environment for all members of the Cornell community. Consider the criteria above and use the [Skills for Success](#) to inform your response. We would also suggest including one or more [Core Values](#) to improve your submission.
   - **Examples:**
     - Perhaps this nominee supported colleagues or team members in digesting and better understanding current events to create a safe space for dialogue. To enable their colleagues to bring their authentic selves to work.
     - Or, maybe the nominee incorporated lessons learned from diversity and inclusion trainings into their local unit, fostering a more welcoming and inclusive environment.
     - Maybe the nominee developed and/or delivered targeted programming that helped enhance DEI initiatives across campus or for a localized unit or department.

2. **Group Nomination:** If you know others who would like to nominate this individual, you may do so as a group by adding the additional nominators’ names and net IDs to the online nomination form. Additional information may be requested of these individuals as part of the review process.

3. **Self-Nomination:** If you would like to nominate yourself for this award category, please provide the names and Net IDs of 2-3 individuals who can support your application.

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**New! The Culture of Sustainability Award**

**In a Nutshell:** Recognizes an employee who has exemplified the sustainability values of Cornell, made notable
contributions to the sustainable development and social equity of the Cornell campus, or displayed outstanding partnership for advancing sustainability among the Cornell community.

**Keywords**: Environment, Climate, Green, Balance

[accordion]

**Overview and Criteria**

As a global leader in sustainability innovation and learning, Cornell embraces a sustainability framework built around four key areas: Purpose, Prosperity, Planet, and People. This framework acknowledges that sustainability isn’t just about the environment – sustainability integrates how our actions and culture help create a healthy planet, ensure the wellbeing and equity of people, support a thriving economy, and contribute to our purpose as an educational institution (learn more about Cornell’s sustainability framework). Nominations may focus on a specific project or action, or the scope of work undertaken by an individual (group projects should consider the ONE Cornell award).

**Your Culture of Sustainability nominee should possess these essential Skills for Success:**

- **VISION**: works to advance Cornell’s climate and sustainability goals as part of a larger effort that benefits our community and region.
- **COMMUNICATION**: shares sustainability knowledge and solutions, and contributes to or creates collaborations that strengthen trust and community building towards climate and sustainability goals of the university.
- **JUDGMENT**: makes informed decisions that advance Cornell as a model of sustainable operations and experience.
- **INITIATIVE**: displays passion and innovation in sustainability thinking and practice, prioritizes sustainability, and empowers others to do the same.

We also encourage you to explore and incorporate one or more of Cornell’s Core Values into your nomination:

- Purposeful Discovery
- Free and Open Inquiry and Expression
- A Community of Belonging
- Exploration across Boundaries
- Changing Lives through Public Engagement
- Respect for the Natural Environment

**Nomination:**

1. **What we’re looking for**: Here is your chance to tell us about an individual who goes beyond expectations to make progress toward Cornell’s sustainability goals. Consider the criteria above and use the Skills for Success to inform your response. We would also suggest including one or more Core Values to improve your submission.
   - **Examples:**
     - Nominee may have successfully reached, or helped a unit to reach, a climate action plan goal, reduced campus emissions, or improved sustainable performance in a specific area.
     - Perhaps the nominee contributed to academic or educational programs addressing sustainability topics, or otherwise helped prepare students, staff, or community members to make informed sustainable decisions at work and home.
     - Research projects or projects which attempted progress yet failed will be considered, as they teach how to improve for future efforts.

2. **Group Nomination**: If you know others who would like to nominate this individual, you may do so as a group by adding the additional nominators’ names and net IDs to the online nomination form. Additional information may be requested of these individuals as part of the review process.

3. **Self-Nomination**: If you would like to nominate yourself for this award category, please provide the names and Net IDs of 2-3 individuals who can support your application.

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The Thoughtful Leader Award

In a Nutshell: Recognizes an employee who brings out the best in others. They mentor and/or coach colleagues with exceptional skill.

Keywords: Supervisor, Manager, Mentor, Leader

Overview and Criteria

The Thoughtful Leader Award is presented to Cornell employees who consistently demonstrate a high level of commitment and dedication to their employees and the Cornell workplace. Strong nominees create an environment that develops, empowers, engages, challenges, and motivates their staff and colleagues with a result of greater productivity, effectiveness, and a sense of belonging. They are problem-solvers and act with foresight and professionalism. These individuals also “live” the values of Learning, Discovery, and Engagement at Cornell.

Your Thoughtful Leader nominee should possess these Leadership Skills for Success:

- INITIATIVE: shows a strong work ethic and helps employees to strategize and determine priorities; looks for opportunities to take initiative and/or exceed expectations.
- GROWTH: takes on the tough challenges; produces results under challenging circumstances and changing environments; prioritizes professional development for self and staff; looks for opportunities to grow employees’ skills and knowledge.
- VISION: inspires staff to work more efficiently and effectively; appreciates the value of feedback; an ambassador for the university as a great workplace where everyone can be their authentic self.
- INCLUSION: promotes an inclusive work culture; supportive of work/life integration for all employees; supports participation in university events and programs.

We also encourage you to explore and incorporate one or more of Cornell’s Core Values into your nomination:

- Purposeful Discovery
- Free and Open Inquiry and Expression
- A Community of Belonging
- Exploration across Boundaries
- Changing Lives through Public Engagement
- Respect for the Natural Environment

Nomination:

1. What we’re looking for: Here is your chance to tell us about a special employee that brings out the best in others. They mentor or coach colleagues with exceptional skill, not because they have to but because this is important to them—investing in individuals and thereby investing in Cornell. Consider the criteria above and use the Skills for Success to inform your response. We would also suggest including one or more Core Values to improve your submission.

   Examples:
   - Maybe the nominee showed initiative and flexibility by taking on new job roles as positions became vacant and team responsibilities grew.
   - Perhaps the nominee is an administrator and took the lead in bringing together their local team, unit, or division with virtual gatherings or activities to keep individuals connected and feeling a sense of belonging at the particularly difficult time.
2. **Group Nomination**: If you know others who would like to nominate this individual, you may do so as a group by adding additional nominators’ names and Net IDs to the online nomination form. Additional information may be requested of these individuals as part of the review process.

3. **Self Nomination**: If you would like to nominate yourself for this award category, please provide the names and Net IDs of 2-3 individuals who can support your application.

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**The Trustee Award**

**In a Nutshell**: Established in 2019, the Trustee Award is a joint effort between the Board of Trustees and Human Resources to provide recognition to additional nominees who demonstrate overall excellence.

[accordion]

**Overview and Criteria**

The Trustee Award winners are selected by the Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer and the Board of Trustees from among the entire pool of nominees. The number of Trustee Awards is flexible and has no limitations with regard to the nominee’s category.

Awardees chosen by the program committee, according to the rubric and scoring process, are set aside so the Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer and a representative from the Board of Trustees can review all of the remaining nominees.

They look for overall employee excellence: strong evidence of outstanding character, energy, passion, and a positive impact on the business of the university and the people they work with; individuals whose efforts are particularly interesting and inspiring, and who are especially purposeful and skillful in their actions.

Nominations **cannot** be submitted for a Trustee Award; rather, the winners are chosen from the overall pool of nominees (excluding awardees chosen in named categories). While most awardees are notified prior to the event, announcement of the Trustee Award winners is kept quiet until the awards event, to underscore the prestige of this recognition.

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If you’d like to know more about how nominees are evaluated, [view a draft of the rubric here](#). If you have questions, please contact [excellence_nominations@cornell.edu](mailto:excellence_nominations@cornell.edu).

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