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 has grown over the years, increasing in award categories and awardees – and it has morphed yet again.

In 2018 the program was renamed to the President's Awards for Employee Excellence and included 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. This year, we are excited to announce the addition of a special Trustee award to be given to an outstanding nominee from across the categories.

Awardees will receive recognition points, through Cornell's new Employee Recognition portal, and all nominees will be invited to a luncheon with President Pollack, Vice President Mary Opperman, and senior leaders from across campus.

The nomination process is now closed. Thank you to those who participated in this year's nomination cycle. We look forward to announcing our winners soon.
Scheduling of an in-person awards luncheon will depend on university and government guidance regarding such events; details will be posted here once any decisions are made.

If you’d like to know more about how nominees will be evaluated, view a draft of the rubric here. If you have questions, please contact excellence_nominations@cornell.edu.

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 other 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

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**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, 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 other 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 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](#)
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 other 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.**

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The Culture of Belonging Award

**In a Nutshell:** Recognizes an employee who goes beyond expectations to create and support an open, inclusive, welcoming, and equitable workplace environment for all members of the Cornell community. This person speaks up as an ally when they see unfair treatment and puts diversity and inclusion principles into practice in their everyday work—regardless of the work they do.

**Keywords:** Inclusion, Diversity, Integrity, Welcoming

**Overview and Criteria**

Cornell is committed to increasing the diversity of our workforce and creating an inclusive workplace founded on a culture of respect. Nominees support colleagues in feeling welcome as their authentic selves and empower all members of the 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 other 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.

The Thoughtful Leader Award

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

Keywords: Supervisor, Manager, Mentor, Leader
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.
     - Maybe the nominee volunteered to train and lead a team or colleagues through remote transitions including learning a new tool such as zoom, slack, or Microsoft teams.

2. **Group Nomination:** If you know others who would like to nominate this individual, you may do so as a group by adding other 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.

[accordion]

Updated: 03/15/2021