The Search

Cornell University, one of the world’s premier research universities, invites nominations and applications for the Dean of Engineering. Since its founding in 1870, Cornell Engineering has more than a century of groundbreaking innovation in education and research. Its history of excellence includes contributions across all fields of engineering and a distinguished record of transcending traditional boundaries.

Reporting to the provost and serving as the chief academic officer of the college, the dean will set a bold and ambitious vision for Cornell Engineering that builds on its powerful legacy and harnesses the talent and creativity of the community to solidify its position as one of the world’s preeminent engineering institutions. The dean will support and inspire a dynamic, accomplished faculty to train the next generation of engineering leaders and to advance innovative research that addresses the most pressing challenges facing the world. Cornell is distinguished by its collaborative atmosphere, and the dean has the opportunity to leverage the considerable strengths by promoting and nurturing relationships within and beyond the college, including with Cornell Tech and Weill Cornell Medicine in New York City. The university has a deep-rooted commitment to outreach and engagement, and the dean will continue to build partnerships and promote entrepreneurial efforts that serve the global mission of benefiting humanity and society.

The college seeks an outstanding scholar and a collegial, but decisive leader to propel Cornell Engineering forward. The dean must be an exceptional communicator who is skillful at building relationships with internal and external partners. The next dean will bring a considerable record of administrative leadership and must possess the ability to represent the college compellingly with a variety of audiences, including alumni and donors.

Cornell has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national search firm, to assist with this recruitment. Confidential inquiries, nominations, and applications may be directed to the firm as indicated at the end of this document.
Cornell University

Cornell University is a remarkable community of scholars, educators, students, staff, and alumni who are deeply influenced by proud traditions and a set of cherished founding principles. Unique among its Ivy League peers, Cornell is a private university with a land-grant mission. It is a world-class research institution known for the breadth and rigor of its curricula, and an academy dedicated to preparing young people to be well-educated and well-rounded citizens of the world. Cornell's faculty, staff, and students believe in the critical importance of knowledge—both theoretical and applied—as a means of improving the human condition and solving the world's problems. It embraces traditional liberal arts education, practical applications of knowledge, and interdisciplinary and collaborative approaches to research and teaching. It champions free and open intellectual inquiry and expression, treats all individuals with dignity and respect, celebrates difference and diversity, and remains open and accessible to all who meet its high academic standards.

The collaborative culture and interdisciplinary character of the university are critical to its success and its future. Faculty forge novel partnerships where unexpected integrations of deep expertise point the way toward the solutions of tomorrow. The university fuels this through initiatives that elevate “radical collaboration” across disciplines and academic units. Current areas of emphasis include: nanoscale science and molecular engineering; genome biology; data science; sustainability; the social sciences; infection biology; and the humanities and arts.

Today, Cornell University consists of 15 schools and colleges. Across the Ithaca campus, the Weill Cornell Medicine campuses in New York City and Qatar, and the Cornell Tech campus in New York City, the university enrolls nearly 15,000 undergraduates and over 8,000 graduate and professional school students. Cornell employs some 8,400 staff and 1,700 professorial faculty members in Ithaca and at Cornell Tech and an additional 5,000 staff and 1,700 faculty members at Weill Cornell Medicine in New York City.

Cornell’s financial condition is strong with a balanced budget, growing endowment, and an enviable history of attracting philanthropy and research funding. The university’s operating budget is approximately $4.8 billion, of which 53% supports the Ithaca campus, 46% supports Weill Cornell Medicine, and the remaining one percent supports Cornell Tech. The university's investment portfolio value is close to $7.3 billion as of October 2019.

Cornell is a highly selective university, able to choose from among the very best applicants in the nation and the world. The university’s eight undergraduate schools and colleges admitted 5,330 students from over 49,114 applications received for the Class of 2023. Of those admitted first-year students, 49% self-identify as students of color and 430 are first-generation college students.

At Cornell living is learning. With more than 1,000 student organizations, there’s a community for every interest. There are also 37 Division I athletic teams; dozens of intramural, outdoor education, and recreation programs; 60 recognized fraternities and sororities; 28 affiliated faith communities; and thousands of outreach and volunteer opportunities. Students also have the opportunity to study abroad in over 87 countries, preparing them for life in a global community.
The College of Engineering

Cornell Engineering has a long and storied history of distinction, creativity, and impact. The college established the nation’s first electrical engineering department in 1889 and awarded the nation’s first doctorates in both electrical and industrial engineering. Its legacy continues to this day, as Cornell Engineering brings together the best minds from across disciplines to invent disruptive technologies and discover novel solutions to complex and challenging problems. It is a global leader in research, teaching, and advancing diversity in the field. Cornell Engineering’s Office of Diversity Programs in Engineering (DPE) offers a comprehensive portfolio of programs at the pre-college, undergraduate, graduate, and faculty levels to facilitate the recruitment, development, retention, and success of all members of the engineering community with a concentration on those from backgrounds historically underserved and underrepresented in engineering. It also is a key collaborator across the rich interdisciplinary landscape at Cornell University, playing a role in all of the university’s Radical Collaborations to address society’s most challenging problems.

Engineering students, empowered by this atmosphere of discovery, learn from and work with faculty members who are pushing the limits of engineering. Participation in this research-enhanced environment opens a world of possibilities for students and produces critical thinkers and creative leaders to address the opportunities and challenges of tomorrow. The college enrolls a diverse and talented student body that includes 3,239 undergraduate students, with 50% female students, 17% underrepresented minority students, and 10% international students. The graduate enrollment of the college is 2,115 with 33% female students, 6% underrepresented minority students, and 58% international students. The college has over 46,600 living alumni around the globe.

The college is home to a diverse, collaborative, talented, and dedicated 207 tenured and tenure-track faculty and an additional 42 research faculty and lecturers and 8 Professors of Practice who work every day to change the world. Faculty span 10 departments, schools, and programs: Applied and Engineering Physics; Meinig School of Biomedical Engineering; Smith School of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering; Civil and Environmental Engineering; Earth and Atmospheric Sciences; Electrical and Computer Engineering; Materials Science and Engineering; Sibley School of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering; Operations Research and Information Engineering; and Systems Engineering. The college is affiliated with the department of Biological and Environmental Engineering, which is run by the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS), and maintains a close strategic relationship with the Faculty of Computing and Information Science (CIS), whose faculty are tenured in the College of Engineering – there is shared responsibility with the Dean of CIS for tenure and promotions of faculty. This position is among the primary Deans overseeing the technical disciplines at Cornell Tech. Two Cornell Engineering programs are currently offered at Cornell Tech in New York City (Master of Engineering in Electrical and Computer Engineering and Master of Engineering in Operations Research and Information Engineering), with more in development.

The impact of the faculty and student research enterprise is immeasurable. Spanning all engineering disciplines, total research expenditures in FY19 were $83.5 million. The research portfolio is incredibly varied and broad, but the college has identified four strategic thrusts to organize many of its activities: Advanced Materials; Complex Systems, Network Science and
Computation; Bioengineering; and Energy and the Environment. Cornell Engineering boasts outstanding infrastructure to support its research enterprise, with specialized laboratories and research facilities across the Engineering Quad as well as in Duffield Hall, one of the country's most sophisticated research and teaching facilities for nanoscale science and engineering—continuing Cornell’s preeminent leadership in the field since its inception more than 30 years ago.

Cornell is home to more than 100 interdisciplinary centers, institutes, laboratories, and programs that support research and enhance education. These centers provide cutting-edge infrastructure for scholars and investigators and serve as focal points for collaboration on research, teaching, and outreach across the campus. Current interdisciplinary centers led by engineering faculty include the Cornell Center on the Physics of Cancer Metabolism; Cornell High Energy Synchrotron Source; Center for Transportation, Environment, and Community Health; Cornell NanoScale Science and Technology Facility; Cornell Energy Systems Institute; Platform for the Accelerated Realization, Analysis and Discovery of Interface Materials; Kavli Institute at Cornell for Nanoscale Science; MSK-Cornell Center for Translation of Cancer Nanomedicine; Cornell Initiative for Digital Agriculture; and the Upstate New York i-Core Node.

More information about Cornell University and the college can be found at https://www.cornell.edu/ and https://www.engineering.cornell.edu/.

The Role

Reporting to the provost, the dean serves as the chief academic and executive officer of the College of Engineering, empowering faculty, ensuring student success, leading staff, and representing the college within the university and in the broader world. The dean also serves as a key institutional leader and as a member of the university’s leadership team. The dean promotes a culture of innovation and excellence within the college and fosters collaboration across the university and with key external partners.

At Cornell, the dean sets the vision and strategic direction and has considerable autonomy to execute on strategic priorities for the College of Engineering, including primary responsibility for a $300 million annual operating budget. In collaboration with other deans, most notably the deans of CIS and Cornell Tech, the dean has the opportunity to recruit exceptional scholars into a dynamic and growing STEM environment at Cornell and shape the future of one of the most powerful combinations of intellectual resources at the intersection of data science and technology. In addition, the dean is the chief steward of relationships with the college’s alumni base and with industry partners to bolster support and opportunities for scholars, students, and graduates.

The dean oversees department chairs and school directors for the 10 academic units as well as directors of several institutes. The affiliated departments of Biological and Environmental Engineering and Computer Science have a dotted-line reporting relationship to the dean, but primarily report to the deans of CALS and CIS, respectively. Direct reports to the dean include Associate Dean for Diversity and Faculty Development, Associate Dean for Administration, Associate Dean for Student Services, Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies,
opportunities and challenges for the dean

the primary opportunities and challenges for the next dean will include the following:

provide strategic vision and leadership to continue the college of engineering’s leadership in the field

the dean will develop and articulate a vision that continues to put cornell engineering at the forefront of research, education, and impact by drawing upon the college’s existing strengths and creatively leveraging areas of excellence across the entire university. as other institutions are increasing their investments in engineering, the dean must be forward-thinking and strategic to sustain cornell’s leadership position and even raise its stature and influence in the field. the next dean will support faculty and teams in the pursuit of discoveries, solutions, and breakthroughs for large, multidisciplinary problems and grand challenges. as part of a land-grant, ivy-league institution, cornell engineering has been a major voice in public policy, and the dean has the opportunity to continue and expand its role in setting direction and policy at the state, national, and global levels.

empower educational innovation and excellence

cornell is globally recognized for its unparalleled learning environment. the dean must ensure that cornell engineering is at the forefront of curricular and pedagogical innovation in classrooms and online. the college must be attuned to the needs of its students, building on the nurturing environment on campus and fostering a community in which all students can thrive.

champion and advance the institutional commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion

cornell engineering has demonstrated a deep commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion since its founding, and in many ways is leader among its peers. while the college has made great strides in nurturing a more diverse and inclusive community with a remarkable record of attracting students and faculty of all backgrounds to cornell, there remains work to be done. the new dean will continue to expand the college’s efforts to recruit an increasingly diverse cadre of faculty, students, and staff. the dean must also be attentive to retention efforts for women and underrepresented minorities and must continually reinforce a culture in which all faculty, students, and staff are welcomed, valued, and supported.

recruit, retain, and develop eminent faculty

in collaboration with department leadership, the dean will lead efforts in the recruitment and professional development of an exceptional faculty. the dean will work to align recruitments with the strategic priority areas for the college and university and will encourage the recruitment of leading scholars and educators who span traditional fields. it is the dean’s responsibility to create an environment in which all faculty members thrive and feel that they can achieve their career goals.
Manage a large and complex academic unit

The dean is not only an academic leader, but also the chief administrator of a highly complex organization, including a considerable budget and endowment. The dean will build on the strong foundation to create a cohesive, efficient, and high-performing organization. The dean has primary responsibility for all of the college's fiscal, programmatic, research, teaching, and service activities and must ensure that they adhere to the highest standard.

Elevate the visibility of the college, forge strong relationships with alumni, donors, and the Engineering College Council, and lead the college's fundraising efforts

The dean will be a vocal champion to a range of external audiences and potential funders for the ways in which Cornell Engineering is changing the world. The dean must publicize the accomplishments of faculty, staff, and students and be a tireless advocate to generate critical resources to fuel the college's continued success. Ensuring a robust and effective communications operation is key, as is working effectively with Alumni Affairs and Development and other deans to capitalize on the extraordinary philanthropic potential of the college, including the opportunity to name the college. Furthermore, supporting the development of industrial collaborations, research partnerships, and entrepreneurial activity will be a priority for the dean to broaden and amplify the impact of Cornell Engineering in the world.

Support transformative, interdisciplinary research

The dean will ensure the continued success of a robust research enterprise by supporting individual faculty research efforts while also facilitating teams to pursue large, multidisciplinary projects. The dean works with other leaders to establish the research vision, set the tone for innovation and excellence, and guide collaborative research efforts. At the same time, the dean will nurture relationships with government and foundation partners to ensure that Cornell Engineering is positioned to compete effectively for research support. Garnering additional large center grants from the NSF, DoE, DoD, and other funding agencies, as well as large industry-university collaborations will be critical. In addition, the dean must address the college's needs for new or updated facilities including highly specialized, well-equipped laboratories that will enable engineering faculty to continue their cutting-edge work.

Support and pursue collaborations across the university and externally

The College of Engineering is engaged in collaborative efforts across the entire university, and the dean is a key leader on campus. The dean should champion opportunities for additional, cross-unit program development and generate excitement around possible intellectual partnerships. At the same time, there remains considerable opportunity to deepen existing partnerships, most notably with the Cornell Tech campus and with CIS. Together, these three units are almost unrivaled in the depth of their science and technology expertise, and the dean will have the unique opportunity to leverage this formidable force for societal impact.
Professional and Personal Qualifications

To build on this foundation of strength, Cornell Engineering seeks a bold leader with ambitious vision, a collegial leadership style, and the energy to inspire the college community. Candidates should demonstrate significant leadership in a large, highly complex enterprise. While no single candidate will have all the ideal qualifications, Cornell seeks candidates with the following qualifications and abilities:

- An intellectual leader; a distinguished teacher, scholar, entrepreneur, or innovator; an earned doctorate and a distinguished record of research impact;
- A demonstrated track record of enhancing diversity and inclusion and bringing creative strategies to addressing the challenges of recruiting and retaining underrepresented minorities and women in STEM;
- A keen sense of the trends and developments in global science and engineering and evidence of supporting and growing large-scale research programs;
- A demonstrated passion for students and a commitment to excellence in teaching and student success;
- An experienced administrator commensurate with experience as a department chair, associate dean, or dean, and a track record of administrative accomplishments;
- Proven ability to recruit superb researchers and educators;
- An astute understanding of academic finances and experience establishing budget priorities and serving as a responsible steward of resources;
- A consultative leadership style; an excellent collaborator who can partner with other deans and administrators, faculty, staff, and students;
- Established connections to industry and the ability to create opportunities for faculty and students with corporate partners;
- An exceptional communicator who can inspire internal and external constituencies to attract partners and raise funds and support;
- Ability and eagerness to serve as a public intellectual on behalf of the college and the field of engineering;
- Well-honed problem solving skills;
- Ability to instill trust and confidence among others; and a record that demonstrates the highest degree of integrity, honesty, and fairness.

To Apply

Inquiries, nominations, and applications should be sent in strict confidence to:

John Muckle or Karen McPhedran
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Diversity and Inclusion are a part of Cornell University’s heritage. Cornell is a recognized employer and educator valuing AA/EEO, Protected Veterans, and Individuals with Disabilities.