

Cindy Crawford

Cornell degree: MBA '90

Unendorsed candidate; petitioned to be on ballot



Universities play a crucial role: to foster pursuit of truth without dictating what “truth” is. If they abandon that role for political activism, then they leave a vacuum they were meant to fill. The board’s most important issue is to uphold Cornell’s dedication to pursuing truth while remaining neutral as an institution.

Describe the reasons you are interested in serving on the board. What strengths and attributes would you bring to this role?

The challenges Cornell has faced regarding freedom of expression and institutional neutrality are squarely within my professional expertise, which focuses on upholding free speech, and First Amendment rights. The nuances between maximizing protection for expression while guarding against recasting destructive behavior as speech can be difficult to navigate. I have the experience to discern the difference, and the courage to make that distinction. Transparency in funding and the value Cornell provides students is also a key issue, which fits well within my previous experience in finance.

In your opinion, what does Carl Becker’s concept of “freedom and responsibility” mean for today’s Cornell community?

Carl Becker provides a roadmap for reinvigorating “a primary value upon which in the long run all other values depend,” which is to “know what is true.” That pursuit requires characteristics of freedom that are inherent to Cornell, but also necessary to the larger pluralistic society, based on appreciating the one “who thinks otherwise.” If Cornell is to nurture something better than the mass-produced model of student, then it must reinvigorate appreciation for the contrary person who breaks from the herd. Diversity of thought fosters acceptance of others, and allows Cornell to transmit rational and humane values to its students.

Interim President Michael I. Kotlikoff recently said that this is an important time to “educate citizens to think for themselves, and live together; and to value truth, openness and equality as cornerstones of democracy.” In your opinion, what does this mean at Cornell?

This means that Cornell must provide a forum for the pursuit of truth without adopting an institutional position in which one winning narrative pushes out all others. It also means individuals may make personal evaluations of ideas without being compelled to adopt a position based on who or what they have been labelled—and, that they can “change sides” of a debate when that is where the truth leads them. Finally, equality is a characteristic of human worth—all created equal—and not a characteristic of ideas or beliefs, which can be challenged on their merits.

Professional experience:

- Americans for Prosperity Foundation, senior policy counsel, 2019–present
- Cause of Action Institute, senior counsel litigation, 2017–2019
- LeClairRyan, attorney/partner litigation, 2010–2017
- Nixon Peabody, attorney litigation, 2006–2010
- GE, finance manager, 1999–2002
- Mattel Toy Company, director of finance/controller/analyst, 1994–1999
- Ford Motor Company, financial analyst/systems analyst, 1990–1993

Alumni service:

- Cornell Club of Colorado, member, 2001–2002
- Johnson Graduate School of Management, prospective student interviewer, 1997

Community/public service/philanthropic priorities:

- Bishop Ireton HS, theater boosters/flowers coordinator, 2020–present
- Bishop Ireton HS and summer league swim meet, on-deck official (stroke and turn, timer), 2012–present
- St. John the Evangelist Church, lector, 2009–present
- Georgetown University Law Center, prospective student interviewer, 2021–2022
- The Basilica School of St. Mary, Odyssey of the Mind team coach, 2018–2021
- Assorted law schools, moot court/mock trial judge, 2009–2021
- The Basilica School of St. Mary, Volleyball coach (7th and 8th grade), 2019
- Assorted pro bono legal representation, 2007–2016
- St. Mary’s of Piscataway, fall festival coordinator, 2013–2015
- Figure Skating Club of Southern Maryland, founding member, 2013

Other education:

- MA, American Government, Georgetown University, 2006
- JD, Georgetown University Law Center, 2005
- BA, Applied Mathematics, University of California, Berkeley, 1987

Student involvements/activities:

- Johnson School, Frozen Assets Hockey
- Johnson School, Operations Management Society

Additional information:

I am currently living my dream job: I spend most of my time drafting amicus briefs on free speech issues (easily found at the SCOTUS website if you’re so inclined). I live with my husband, daughters, and three lovely cats that were left in our front yard bushes when they were two-weeks old. Over the past 18 years, I’ve spent time supporting kid activities—from coaching Odyssey of the Mind and volleyball, to theater boosters (making hundreds of bouquets for actors), to timing and stroke-judging swim meets. Sadly, I have so far failed to convince my daughters to play hockey—but there’s still time!