

Valisha Graves

Cornell degree: AB '85 (A&S)



One of the most important issues facing the Board of Trustees is how Cornell advances its 21st century education model in novel and innovative ways that resonate with, and are accessible to, a diverse set of global learners and educators, and maintain traditions that embolden alumni to engage and support.

How can trustees and alumni best support the university's mission to do the greatest good for Cornell students, and in the world?

Cornell is fortunate that trustees and alumni are doing the greatest good in their communities, in the world, and for students. As alumni, we can amplify this message and garner greater support for current students by encouraging classmates and friends to: share personal stories about how they're doing the "greatest good" through volunteerism, mentorship, and philanthropy endeavors; identify a cause or campus initiative where they can be impactful; consider engaging as part of an affinity group and do the greatest good as a collective. To successfully marshal alumni to do the greatest good for Cornell requires conviction, a sustained commitment, and active alumni-to-alumni engagement. Trustees can provide strategic direction and support to the university to determine how best to leverage and harness alumni talent in this endeavor.

How do you envision the Board of Trustees supporting Cornell's founding principle of "... any person ... any study?" How does this relate to Cornell's priority to strengthen and broaden diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives across the university?

Many educational institutions are trying to determine how best to embed diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) at all levels—classroom, curriculum, faculty, admissions, endowment, etc. This is a strategic imperative for any relevant 21st century university. Cornell is unique among its peer institutions in that its founding principle is "... any person ... any study." As stewards of the university, trustees should hire an independent third party to conduct a DEI audit with a lens towards an analysis of these aspects of the university, not just demographics. The audit findings will help inform the university president and trustees of opportunities regarding hiring practices, curriculum, student housing, and programming, and outline criteria to measure how the university is progressing against its stated goals. Trustees should consider an ad-hoc committee that will track progress as it broadens DEI initiatives throughout the university.

Why do you hope to serve on the board? How will you contribute to Cornell's success?

The biblical verse (Luke 12:48) says, "to whom much is given, much is required." As a first-generation student and Cornell Tradition Fellow, my Cornell education sowed many seeds for myself, and for current and future generations of my family. The opportunity to serve and influence Cornell's strategic direction and further its mission of "... any person ... any study"—to make this experience accessible to talented students from all backgrounds—is compelling. I remain a trustee of my high school because I considered it a transformative educational experience. At Suffield, I witnessed firsthand how strategic and philanthropic support from dedicated trustees can advance an educational institution. As a multi-faceted, proven alumni volunteer leader and connector, I will help to lead and drive initiatives and leverage my alumni relationships in support of the university's mission.

Professional experience:

- Executive Director, JPMorgan Chase, Community & Consumer Bank, Senior Digital Product Lead - API Marketplace, 2021–present
- Executive Director, Morgan Stanley, 2006–2021
 - Head Account Onboarding Fraud Controls & Product Strategy, Wealth Management, 2020–2021

- Head of Onboarding Strategy, One Client Data Initiative, Wealth Management, 2018–2020
- Practice Lead, Enterprise Infrastructure & Computing Practice, 2017–2018
- Product Owner, Technology Asset Inventory (TAI), Enterprise Computing, 2015–2017
- Business Technology Officer, Global Capital Markets, 2011–2015
- Product Manager, Research, Investment Banking & Equity Derivatives, 2006–2011
- Vice President, ModelWare Team, 2005–2006

Alumni service:

- President's Council of Cornell Women, chair, 2021–present; vice chair, 2020–2021; Communications Committee co-chair, 2018–2020; member at large, 2016–present
- Cornell University Council, member at large, 2019–present; Administrative Board member, 2020–2021; ex officio, 2021–present
- Cornell Mosaic, member at large, 2018–present; Executive Committee member, 2014–2020; Development Committee chair, 2019–2020
- W.E. Cornell Advisory Board, member, 2019–present
- Arts & Sciences Career Connections Committee, Finance Team member, 2015–present
- Cornell Alumni Admissions Ambassador Network, member, 2009–present
- Cornell Black Alumni Association, lifetime member
- Cornell Alumni Association of New York, member

Community/public service/philanthropic priorities:

- Suffield Academy, Trustee, 1988–present; Strategic Planning and Audit & Finance Committee (current), Investment Committee (past)
- Council for Urban Professionals (CUP) Tech Catalyst, 2022–present
- NYU Fubon Center Fintech Advisory Board, member, 2021–present
- Chair, CFA New York Fintech Thought Leadership Committee, 2020–present
- 92Y Women inPower Fellow, 2019–present
- Big Brothers, Big Sisters, 2007–2016
- 100 Women in Fintech, member
- Abyssinian Baptist Church
- Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. (AKA), general member
- Morgan Stanley EDIT (Enhancing Diversity in Tech) forum co-founder

Other education:

- Master of Business Administration, Columbia Business School, 1994
- Carpigiani Gelato University (Bologna), Basic Gelato Course, 2013

Student involvements/activities:

- Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Mu Upsilon Chapter
- Cornell in Washington
- Cornell University Ambassador
- Cornell Tradition Fellowship
- Olin Library, student employee

Additional information:

Valisha is an Executive Director at JPMorgan Chase and has spent most of her career in leadership roles in fintech product management. A native of Cleveland, Ohio, she entered Cornell after graduating from Suffield Academy where she was an A Better Chance Scholar and has been a trustee since 1988. Education is her passion. She co-founded AACEP (African American Cultural Enrichment Program) with two fellow Cornellians and is a guest lecturer on fintech at leading business schools. She also helped launch EDIT (Enhancing Diversity in Technology), the first Wall Street forum aimed at advancing the careers of Black and Latino technologists.