



Elizabeth Garrett

June 30, 1963 – March 6, 2016

During her all-too-short time as Cornell's 13th president, Elizabeth Garrett touched Cornell and thousands of Cornellians in deep and enduring ways. Her intelligence, her energy, her candor, and her fierce determination inspired and pushed the university to think more boldly about what we can achieve together, and to take greater risks to get there.

Answering a question about what she hoped her legacy at Cornell would be, President Garrett offered this observation: "My family on my mother's side, the MacKinnon clan, has a motto: 'Fortune assists the daring.' I can't predict what my legacy as president will ultimately be, but I intend to be true to that motto, while always keeping academic values, and academic excellence, at the fore." During her eight months in office, President Garrett invigorated standards of excellence across the university, particularly in the three areas she identified in her Inaugural Address:

- renewing and revitalizing the faculty as the foundation of Cornell's continuing intellectual leadership;
- strengthening the academic experience of our diverse students by making a Cornell education more engaged, more global, more entrepreneurial, while also building on a strong foundation of the liberal arts and sciences;
- exploiting the extraordinary potential of Cornell's dual footprint--in Ithaca and in New York City--to create new collaborations and to realize synergies that would extend the university's excellence and impact.

The first woman to serve as Cornell's president, President Garrett also held tenured faculty positions in the Cornell Law School, the Department of Government in the College of Arts and Sciences, and the Samuel Curtis Johnson Graduate School of Management.

Shortly after being named president-elect, she told *Times Higher*

Education magazine, “it is important for women and men to see strong and capable women in positions of leadership, so we understand that certain characteristics such as gender and race do not determine how well people do in those offices.”

President Garrett was deeply committed to the liberal arts, having earned her B.A. degree in history with special distinction from the University of Oklahoma before going on to earn her J.D. degree from the University of Virginia School of Law. She believed that humanistic understanding is essential for navigating complex problems, and provides an important foundation for a rich and meaningful life. She knew as well that the pursuit of curiosity-driven research in the sciences and beyond is an investment in the future, since the discoveries of today often contribute to the inventions of tomorrow. A commitment to students and the residential educational experience was also fundamental for her. She understood that a high quality college education has the power to transform lives.

As a legal academic, President Garrett was a superstar and a strong addition to the Cornell Law School faculty. She began her legal career as a law clerk for U.S. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, an iconic figure in the development of American law in the twentieth century. She began her teaching career at the University of Chicago and quickly became a leading figure in the fields of legislation, direct democracy, and tax policy.

At the University of Southern California, which was her academic home immediately prior to coming to Cornell, she was the Frances R. and John J. Duggan Professor of Law, Political Science, Finance and Business Economics, and Public Policy, and she continued to publish law review articles at an impressive clip even after becoming USC’s vice president for academic planning and budget and then provost and senior vice president for academic affairs. She also taught law as a visiting professor at the University of Virginia Law School, at Harvard Law School, and in Budapest and Israel, and in 2005 was appointed to a tax reform panel by President George W. Bush.

At Cornell, President Garrett’s efforts to surmount bureaucratic obstacles were instrumental in speeding New York State’s approval of the Law School’s new LLM program in Law, Technology and Entrepreneurship at Cornell Tech, which launched in fall 2016 in New York City. Her help was crucial to the Law School’s ability to get the program off to a strong start, but it was also emblematic of her style. She was simply unwilling to let red tape stand between her and the goals she wanted to achieve.

When President Garrett addressed the Johnson faculty and staff in late November 2015, she spoke of Johnson as “one of the most

exciting business schools in the country,” with “the ability to evolve and respond to a changing world.” She spoke about the importance of collaborations across the academy that drive the application of knowledge and ideas to solve complex global problems, and she believed that closer connections among all the schools at Cornell would better enable us to address this objective. She cited connections between Johnson and the College of Engineering and Department of Computer Science at Cornell that resulted in the Johnson Cornell Tech MBA and Johnson’s new Digital Technology Immersion.

During a private meeting with the Johnson Advisory Council, while still president-elect, Elizabeth Garrett had a lively discussion of business education at Cornell. That meeting convinced her that integrating Cornell’s three accredited business programs--the School of Hotel Administration, the Charles H. Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management, and the Samuel Curtis Johnson Graduate School of Management was an important priority, and she set in motion discussions among all stakeholders that resulted in an integrated College of Business, with the excellence, scope and scale needed to cement Cornell’s position as a world-class center of teaching and research for business management and entrepreneurship. The College of Business, which opened on July 1, 2016, is among the most visible achievements of President Garrett’s time at Cornell.

Part of what drew Elizabeth Garrett to Cornell was Cornell Tech, and the spirit of entrepreneurship and reinvention expressed there. She was ready to bring that inventive energy to the rest of the university as well and to challenge us to imagine our roles in new and creative ways. She supported new teaching approaches, called for us to become more globally engaged, saw the university as a leader in fostering dialogue over difficult topics, asked us to be disciplined and strategic in our choices and investments, and encouraged the development of new interdisciplinary research areas. For all of this, as well as for her sense of infectious optimism and her dazzling smile, she is remembered and greatly missed.

In her Inaugural Address Beth Garrett set out her hopes for Cornell. She used C. P. Cavafy’s poem *Ithaka* as a metaphor for life’s difficult journeys. Beth’s journey to Ithaca, her personal bravery, and her commitment to excellence will continue to inspire a generation of Cornellians who have all too briefly felt the intense power of her intellect, her ambition and her aspirations.

Surviving her are her husband, Andrei Marmor, professor of law and philosophy at Cornell; her parents, Robert and Jane Garrett; sister, Laura Gruntmeir; and other family members.

Provost Michael I. Kotlikoff, chair; Dean Soumitra Dutta, Cornell College of Business; Dean Eduardo Peñalver, Cornell Law School and professor of law; and Dean Gretchen Ritter, College of Arts & Sciences

