

Cornell Military Alumni Association Proposal



(06 June 2020)



Background

Support of public service, particularly in the U.S. military, is embedded into the spirit and letter of Cornell University's DNA. At the onset of the Civil War, Ezra Cornell led a citizens' committee in support of the Union Army, personally delivering aid to the frontlines.¹ Reflecting on Ezra Cornell's civil war efforts, Hunter Rawlings III, the University's 10th President, said that "[Cornell] was right there with the soldiers and obviously felt protective of the Ithaca boys -- he genuinely looked out for their welfare." Upon its founding in 1865 as New York State's land-grant college, Cornell admitted many Veterans of the civil war.²

Cornell's charter, echoing the provisions of the Morrill Land-Grant Act, states that the "leading object of said corporation shall be to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts, including military tactics, in order to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions of life."³ Cornell's military community is essential to both aspects of this mission. ROTC departments teach military tactics to service-minded Cornellians and incoming Student-Veterans provide the socio-economic diversity sought by Cornell's founders.⁴

Echoing Cornell University's claim to be the "first American University," generations of Cornellians have responded in times of crisis. Cornell provided the most commissioned officers of any university to America's World War I efforts and, unable to commission at the time, Cornell women served on the front lines as contract surgeons.⁵ Over 20,000 Cornellians answered the call of duty during World War II.⁶

As our nation's current long war continues, the state of the military-affiliated Cornellians is more precarious than ever. ROTC programs are orders of magnitude smaller today than in previous eras and Cornell's Undergraduate Veteran's Association is in its infancy. Cornell's military-affiliated alumni are servants at heart and, if provided with an opportunity to serve Cornell through a Cornell Military Alumni Association (CMAA), will answer the call again.

¹ "Ezra Cornell: A Nineteenth-Century Life," Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University, accessed May 17, 2020, <https://rmc.library.cornell.edu/Ezra-exhibit/EC-life/EC-life-9.html>.

² Linda Grace Kobas, "University's founder describes the Union retreat at Bull Run and his flight to safety," Cornell Chronicle, Cornell University, accessed May 17, 2020, <https://news.cornell.edu/stories/1998/03/ezra-cornells-great-granddaughter-donates-his-dramatic-1861-letter>.

³ "Charter of Cornell University," Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University, accessed May 17, 2020, https://rmc.library.cornell.edu/cornell150/exhibition/charter/cu_charter_ammended.pdf.

⁴ "Profile of the Contemporary Student Veteran," Student Veterans of America, accessed May 17, 2020, <https://nvest.studentveterans.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Profiles-of-a-Contemporary-Student-Veteran.pdf>.

⁵ Elaine Engst and Blaine Friedlander, "Cornell Rewind: A great school faces the Great War," Cornell Chronicle, Cornell University, accessed May 17, 2020, <https://news.cornell.edu/stories/2015/01/cornell-rewind-great-school-faces-great-war>.

⁶ "History," Cornell Navy ROTC, accessed May 17, 2020, <https://navy.cornell.edu/home/about/>.



Mission

To promote Cornell University's land-grant mission by organizing military-affiliated Cornell alumni across generations in support of the educational, professional, and social advancement of service-minded Cornellians.

Objectives

1. Connect Military-affiliated Cornellians across Generations

Cornell's military-affiliated community exists in silos by Cornell-affiliation and time. An ROTC graduate from 2014 is unlikely to know an ROTC graduate from 2011 and is even less likely to know a CUVA graduate from 2017. These silos undermine the mutual camaraderie and shared affinity of Veterans. This shared affinity and an inherent desire to serve others underpins robust Veteran networks at Cornell's largest employers, Veteran's nonprofits, and our peer institutions. A CMAA can achieve this objective through three lines of effort:

- **Centralized Alumni Communications:** Similar to Class Notes or newsletters maintained by other Cornell Alumni Associations, a single point of distribution would allow military-affiliated Cornellians to share personal updates and for Cornell's military-affiliated organizations to provide organizational updates.
- **A Definitive Point of Contact:** The means, inspiration, and impetus to serve Cornell can come at any time. A definitive, discoverable presence online would allow military-affiliated Cornellians to interface with Cornell's military community at their convenience.
- **Professional Networking (LinkedIn):** CUVA members are significantly more likely to be first-generation students than the average Cornellians. A CMAA can reduce the inequity in their personal networks' of Student-Veterans by unlocking the Cornell Military network in an easily discoverable format. Military-affiliated Cornellians are uniquely positioned to advocate for Student-Veterans within their own network.



2. Support Current Student-Veterans and ROTC

Cornell's military-affiliated alumni are engaged in distinguished careers in the public, private, and non-profit sectors. An engaged and organized alumni base can create immediate value to military-affiliated Cornellians still on the hill. Improving outcomes of today's students does not just create more engaged alumni, it can help attract more service-minded individuals to Cornell, fostering our land-grant mission. A CMAA can achieve this through three lines of effort:

- **Fundraising:** Recent fundraising efforts prove that the silos that govern military-affiliated Cornellians bear no effect on the desire to give back. ROTC alumni, Officer Candidate School graduates and CUVA alums have all generously supported CUVA. For example, a fundraising need by Air Force ROTC is likely to resonate with Air Force Veterans hailing from CUVA, the Johnson School, Law School, etc.
- **Mentorship:** Whether it is a student-veteran transitioning to Cornell, or a Cornellian transitioning into the military through ROTC, OCS or enlisting, there are members of the Cornell military-affiliated community that can mentor them through the process. Managing these transitions successfully will help guarantee successful outcomes for our young alums who will pay it forward for generations to come.
- **Recruitment:** In the post 9/11 era, America's leading employers have fostered robust diversity and inclusion efforts for attracting Veteran talent. A strong alumni support system for ROTC and Students-Veterans can be a differentiator for admitted service-minded students, improving yield.

3. Deepen Engagement between Military-Affiliated Alumni and Cornell

The CMAA creates a new approach for Cornell to reach military-affiliated alumni, simultaneously calling on two formative experiences, time in the military and on the hill. The creation of the CMAA will create positive externalities on the Cornell community as a whole, which the CMAA can foster through three lines of effort:

- **Signature Gatherings:** Centered around homecoming, reunion, and the Cornell Alumni Leadership Conference, a CMAA could organize signature gatherings concurrent with Cornell's major touchpoints with alumni, providing an opportunity for military-affiliated alumni to not just build esprit de corps within the CMAA, but also reconnect with their other Cornell affinities.



- **Joint Service Opportunities:** Organizations such as Team RWB and Team Rubicon highlight that service doesn't end for many Veterans after they leave the military. An active CMAA could serve as the backbone for regional service events for all members of the Cornell community.
- **Alumni Professional Development:** A CMAA, through the committees articulated in the next section, would provide an opportunity to train Cornell's younger military-affiliated alumni to serve Cornell competently across its ecosystem of alumni leadership roles.

Structure

Executive Board

1. President
2. Secretary (Communications Committee Chair)
3. Treasurer (Finance Committee Chair)

Committees

1. Events and Programming Committee
2. Alumni Relations Committee
3. Campus Stakeholder Committee
4. Communications Committee
5. Finance Committee

Officer's Roles & Responsibilities

1. **President:** The President is the Chief Executive Officer of the CMAA, manages CMAA's continued operations as articulated by its bylaws and presides over all meetings of the CMAA Board. The President represents the CMAA to all external stakeholders, supervises the CMAA's committees and establishes committees, as necessary.
2. **Secretary:** The Secretary is the Chief Operating Officer of the CMAA. The Secretary maintains records of the minutes of all of the board's meetings, external correspondence, and the CMAA bylaws. The Secretary performs any of the President's duties as delegated. The Secretary notifies members of the board of all upcoming meetings and chairs the Communications Committee.



3. **Treasurer:** The Treasurer is the Chief Financial Officer of the CMAA. The Treasurer shall keep full and accurate accounts of receipts and disbursements of the Corporation, and shall deposit or cause to be deposited all moneys, evidences of indebtedness and other valuable documents of the CMAA in the name and to the credit of the CMAA in the name and credit of the CMAA in banks the board designates. The Treasurer chairs the Finance Committee.

Committee's Roles & Responsibilities

1. **Events and Programming Committee:** The Events and Programming Committee Chair has discretion over the size of the committee and will:
 - Plan and execute events concurrent with major University gatherings such as: Cornell Homecoming, Cornell Reunion and Cornell Alumni Leadership Conference.
 - Provide planning support to CMAA-member led initiatives, such as regional events.
2. **Alumni Relations Committee:** The Alumni Relations Committee Chair has discretion over the size of the committee and will:
 - Maximize engagement (both in breadth and depth) within the military-affiliated alumni community, facilitating connections between CMAA members.
 - Lead development and fundraising efforts in support of the CMAA's mission.
 - Maintain the CMAA database
 - Coordinate with the Campus Stakeholder Committee to leverage the CMAA in support of Student-Veterans, ROTC Cadets and ROTC Midshipmen currently enrolled at Cornell.
3. **Campus Stakeholder Committee:** The Campus Stakeholder Committee Chair has discretion over the size of the committee, but will include as ex-officio members: a representative from the Cornell Undergraduate Veteran's Association, a representative from the Tri-Service ROTC Brigade, and representatives from graduate student-veteran associations at Cornell. The committee will:
 - Leverage the CMAA in support of the professional and educational advancement of military-affiliated Cornell students.
 - Engage the University, identifying opportunities to align the CMAA initiatives with Cornell's priorities.
 - Onboard graduating military-affiliated Cornell students into the CMAA.
 - Coordinate and lead annual stakeholder meetings.



4. **Communications Committee:** Chaired by the Secretary, and at their discretion, the communications committee will:
 - Manage the CMAA's website and any other digital presence
 - Assemble and disseminate a digital newsletter at a regular interval
 - Receive and respond to external correspondence in timely manners

5. **Finance Committee:** Chaired by the Treasurer, and at their discretion, the communications committee will:
 - Prepare the CMAA's financial statements and present them to the board annually.
 - Collaborate with the CMAA's other committees to provide financial resources in support of their initiatives

This proposal was approved by the preliminary CMAA Board on 06 June 2020