

Garrett

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Moving forward, she said she plans to focus the university's resources into specialized fields of study, essentially choosing what the university does best and emphasizing those to the global market for students the university now reaches out to.

"In any university, your touchstone has to be excellence," Garrett said. "What you want to focus your areas on are where you're excellent or where you can be excellent. The reality is nobody can be excellent in everything, so we're about to undergo a strategic planning process at Cornell over the next 18 months where we identify the areas we're excellent, where we can be excellent and influential and where we will focus our resources moving forward."

With the university's growing global perspective, Garrett said Cornell's increasing emphasis on technology could work to elevate the university's mission to "democratize access" and make the university accessible for those who may not have the opportunity but have the talent.

To accomplish this, Garrett said a radical approach to the university's mission and policy will be pertinent in elevating Cornell to its global ambitions for academic leadership.

"We have a new duality of an international urban center and a quintessential college town," Garrett said. "The strength of Cornell has been spanning those dualities, creating a sum greater than the parts themselves, and we need to do that."

An emphasis on the faculty and students was a major theme of Garrett's speech. She touted both the "unparalleled on-campus experience" and the benefit of being able to experience life more fully with a Cornell degree. Garrett said the faculty, which is diverse and focuses on collaboration, serves as the bedrock.

Garrett was named in 2014 to succeed David Skorton as president, becoming the first woman to helm the 150-year-old school. Being the first woman president means more than breaking down a barrier, she noted.

"I'm very proud to be the first woman president of Cornell," Garrett said. "But I also hope to be a role model for not just women students, but all students. It's important for people from all places to see strong women in leadership positions so we don't just see positions in engendered terms."

After the ceremony, the student body and the audience adjourned to a picnic lunch in the Agricultural quad where Garrett mingled among the students as accordion music played from the stage.



SIMON WHEELER / STAFF PHOTO
Cornell University President Elizabeth Garrett, third from left, poses for a photo before the start of her inauguration Friday morning outside Olin Library on the university campus.



SIMON WHEELER / STAFF PHOTO
Spectators sit in the shade at the foot of the A.D. White statue overlooking the Arts Quad Friday morning during Garrett's inauguration.

About Elizabeth Garrett

Education: Bachelor of arts in history from the University of Oklahoma, 1985; law degree from the University of Virginia School of Law, 1988.
Age: 51.
Family: Married to Andrei Marmor, a former USC professor who has joined the Cornell faculty as a full professor with joint appointments in the College of Arts and Sciences and the Law School.
Résumé highlights: Provost and senior vice president for Academic Affairs (2010-2015), USC. Vice president for Academic Planning and Budget (2006-2010), vice provost for Academic Affairs (2005-2006), USC. Commissioner, California Fair Political Practices Commission (2009-2015). Member, President George W. Bush's Advisory Panel on Federal Tax Reform (2005). Professor of law (1999-2003), deputy dean for Academic Affairs, University of Chicago. Visiting professor at Harvard Law School, the University of Virginia Law School, Central European University in Budapest, and the Interdisciplinary Center Law School in Israel. Law clerk for Justice Thurgood Marshall, U.S. Supreme Court (1989-1990).

Artist

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a lot of observations to allow him to bring Homo naledi back to life.

Also while in South Africa, Gurche looked at the full skeleton to create a painting, also for National Geographic, comparing Homo naledi to Lucy, an example of Australopithecus afarensis, and to Turkana Boy, a 1984 find of a Homo erectus skeleton in Kenya.

Researchers named the creature Homo naledi (nah-LEH-dee). That reflects the "Homo" evolutionary group, which includes modern people and our closest extinct relatives, and the word for "star" in a local language. The find was made in the Rising Star cave system.

Learning anatomy

After completing a master's degree in anthropology at the University of Kansas, Gurche has devoted his adult life to building a scientific method for recreating the anatomical appearance of our lost species of ancestors.

He described 30 years of dissection work, on human faces and all the great apes — males and females and juveniles. "I had a lot of questions at the beginning, of course. But only after about 10 years of dissections did I start answering questions that I could actually get some good answers for," said Gurche. "Nobody has a formal education in this."

He has created his own 70-page worksheet. "That worksheet contains tables of data and drawings of how muscles attach and all sorts of things, and I have to go through that worksheet when I make a head," said Gurche. "It sets out the method step by step."

"It turns out there are quite a few relationships between the bony anatomy and the soft tissue of the face that allow you to make a pretty confident prediction," said Gurche.

"The end point is the result of a couple of hundred anatomical decisions," said Gurche. "Since I've never seen this creature before, it's a surprise, even to me, (the) end product," he said. "It's almost like a mystery story where an identity is slowly revealed."

Gurche grew up in a suburb of Kansas City, Kansas, and said his first art job was in about 1968 painting psychedelic

Learn more

John Gurche will talk about the Homo naledi in two locations in Ithaca:

» 3 p.m. Saturday at Barnes & Noble, 614 S. Meadow St. in Ithaca. Gurche will do a reading from his book "Shaping Humanity," take questions and hold a book signing. Also, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., the store will hold a book fair in support of the Museum of the Earth's new early learner Book Nook and educational programming.

» 5:30-7:30 p.m. Thursday, the Paleontological Research Institution and WSKG will hold an event at the Museum of the Earth at 1259 Trumansburg Road where Gurche will shares his perspectives on the discovery of Homo naledi and his creative process. Tickets are \$15 for non-members, \$10 for members and students.

watermelons for a 7-Eleven store in Overland Park, Kansas.

After college he moved to Washington, D.C., for 12 years and found work with the Smithsonian and eventually National Geographic. Then after 14 years in Denver, he and his family moved to Trumansburg almost 10 years ago. "There was this vibe in Trumansburg that we really liked," said Gurche.

Gurche has two local work spaces, one at the Paleontological Research Institution, where he is an artist in residence, and the other in a converted garage at his home in the Village of Trumansburg. "The messy stuff I do at home," said Gurche.

He will talk about his work on Homo naledi at an event Saturday at Barnes & Noble book store in Ithaca and on Thursday at the Museum of the Earth.

His model of Homo naledi, commissioned by National Geographic, has never left Gurche's studio in Tompkins County.

"Geographic sent up one of their people to shoot it up here, so it never left," said Gurche.

That will probably change as he indicated that National Geographic is interested in sending the Homo naledi model out to be exhibited.

*Material from the Associated Press was used in this report.
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YI-KE PENG / CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
John Gurche holds up a blank cast produced during the process of reconstructing heads for the Smithsonian exhibition.



AP
A composite skeleton of Homo naledi surrounded by some of the hundreds of other fossil elements displayed in Magaliesburg, South Africa.