

William (Bill) Fry

Bill Fry is Professor of Plant Pathology and Plant-Microbe Biology who has served in diverse roles at Cornell University and in his professional societies. Most recently, he served as senior associate dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (01-07), with responsibility for department issues, faculty affairs, facilities, sponsored research, and personnel. He has also served as chairman of his department (81-95), on many university committees (the old FCR, FCPR, etc), and as a faculty member of the Cornell Board of Trustees (98-02) where he served on such committees as Buildings and Properties and Academic Affairs. He also was a member of the Presidential Search Committee which resulted in the appointment of Jeffrey Lehman as Cornell's 11th President. Nationally, he was named a fellow of the American Phytopathological Society and served as its president (95-96). His AB is from Nebraska Wesleyan University (66) and his Ph.D. is from Cornell (70). At Cornell since 1971, his teaching has included introductory and graduate courses in plant pathology. His research investigates the plant disease which caused the Irish potato famine, and his lab documented and predicted the impacts of recent global migrations of the pathogen causing that disease.

"I agreed to be a candidate for Dean of the Faculty from a deep respect for this faculty and strong allegiance to the university. Cornell is an outstanding, multifaceted institution – unique among institutions of higher education. Our association with other institutions in the Ivy League clearly identifies our lofty goals relative to the arts and humanities. Our role as New York's land grant university clearly identifies our equally lofty goals relative to the more practical aspects of people's lives. We do an excellent job – ranked typically in the top 15 of elite universities in the USA, and The Washington Monthly ranked us in the top 10 of US institutions using such criteria as: aiding social mobility; advancing knowledge; and encouraging an ethic of service. These rankings do not indicate that we have no challenges, because we do. Resolution of our challenges is confounded by our complexity; we are a major private research university with both private and public funding and responsibilities. My experience with both the private and public aspects will be helpful in dealing with these challenges.

"We are an excellent faculty, making important contribution to society via our research, teaching and outreach. The Dean of the Faculty needs to guard and nurture that excellence – a responsibility that I would take very seriously, and a responsibility in which I have some experience. An excellent faculty also must have a credible, participatory voice in influencing the direction of the university, using its governance structure to communicate effectively with the administration and trustees. On most issues there is mutual agreement because the various constituents of the university (administration, alumni, faculty, staff, students, and trustees) all share a strong affection for the university and want Cornell to be even better. However, different definitions of "better" can sometimes lead to disagreements on directions. I believe the faculty voice can be heard most effectively through respectful, clear and cooperative discussion that emphasizes our shared values. This approach has been largely our tradition, has been successful, and certainly this type of interaction is my style."