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CU Press Release (05/31/94): SECOND GROUP OF CORNELL'S WEISS
PRESIDENTIAL FELLOWS
NAMED FOR THEIR DISTINGUISHED TEACHING

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Contact: Sam Segal
Office: (607) 255-5678
Home: (607) 257-4552

ITHACA, N.Y. - Cornell University President Frank H.T. Rhodes has named the second group of Stephen H. Weiss Presidential Fellows, "selected from among those members of the faculty who are the most effective, inspiring and distinguished teachers of undergraduate students."

The distinguished-teaching honorees, announced by Rhodes at a May 28 dinner in honor of Cornell President Emeritus Dale R. Corson, are:

Walter LaFeber, the Marie Underhill Noll Professor of American History; David A. Levitsky, professor of nutritional sciences and of psychology; and Stephanie Vaughn, associate professor of English and director of the Creative Writing Program.

The awards are named for the chairman of the Board of Trustees, Stephen H. Weiss '57, who endowed the program in memory of his own weekly discussions as an undergraduate student at the home of a man he remembered as a great teacher - former Political Science Professor Clinton Rossiter.

The first three Weiss Fellows, named last spring, were Richard D. Aplin, professor of agricultural economics; James B. Maas, professor of psychology; and Mary J. Sansalone, associate professor of civil and environmental engineering.

Candidates, nominated by undergraduate juniors and seniors, faculty or academic staff - are screened each winter and spring by a committee headed by Secretary of the Faculty Mary A. Morrison. The decisions are made by the president.

Fellows carry their titles as long as they stay at Cornell and may hold them concurrently with other named professorships. They also receive a \$5,000 stipend each year for five years.

EDITORS: Brief biographies of the Weiss Fellows are attached.

Walter LaFeber

LaFeber, 60, the Marie Underhill Noll Professor of American History, teaches more than 300 students each semester, and his history courses are among Cornell's most popular offerings. His lectures, often presented from a simple outline on the blackboard, challenge and intrigue students. He uses current events to help students better understand history, leading one student to describe his lectures as "user friendly."

LaFeber is often cited by undergraduate students as the professor who most inspired them to academic excellence. He joined the Cornell faculty in 1959 as an assistant professor. He was named the Marie Underhill Noll Professor of American History in 1968 and chaired the history department from 1968 to 1973. LaFeber has won numerous honors, including a Clark Teaching Award and a Guggenheim Fellowship. He is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

David A. Levitsky

Since taking over the teaching of Nutrition and Health, Levitsky, 51, professor of nutritional sciences and of psychology, has seen its enrollment increase more than 100 percent. The increase can be attributed to his friendly, informal style of teaching and his ability to make the course interesting and understandable to a wide range of students. In the classroom, Levitsky engages his students in intellectual arguments and uses multimedia presentations and other unusual demonstrations to provide a lasting impression in class. Levitsky is genuinely interested in the academic success of his students, making himself available to them either in person or via electronic mail 24 hours a day. Winner of the 1993 SUNY Chancellor's Award for Teaching, Levitsky joined the Cornell faculty in 1968 as a research associate and was promoted to full professor in 1986.

Stephanie Vaughn

Vaughn, 50, associate professor of English, has been praised by students as a "tough, honest, direct and challenging" professor. She is extremely accessible to her students, often meeting with them for hours in individual conferences in her office or at her home. She has been called the "conscience of the Creative Writing Program" and has worked tirelessly to ensure that its classes are well-taught. Vaughn joined the Cornell faculty in 1985 as assistant professor after serving for two years as a Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow. She was named an associate professor in 1989 and appointed director of the Creative Writing Program in 1991. She is the winner of two O. Henry awards for her short stories Sweet Talk and Kid MacArthur.