



To the bewilderment of friends and family, I left the Lone Star state after high school to attend a school no one had ever heard of (MIT) in a state no one had ever heard of (Massachusetts) to pursue my lifelong dream of being a chemist. As an undergraduate, I became fascinated by the field of surface chemistry and have spent the ensuing years trying to answer very basic questions about chemical reactivity. These days my research is primarily concerned with turning molecular-scale pictures of surfaces into new insights into the photocatalytic behavior of earth-abundant minerals. I joined the Cornell faculty as an assistant professor in 1994 and worked my way through the ranks, most recently completing a 12-year stint as the Director for the Cornell Center for Materials Research (CCMR) — one of the oldest interdisciplinary research centers on campus. Of all of my awards, I am most proud of having been named a Weiss Presidential Fellow in recognition of my contributions to and excellence in undergraduate education.

It is an exciting time to be a member of the Cornell community, with the opening of a new campus in New York City, the emergence of new tools and understanding for collaborative learning and research, and the continual influx of new ideas from incoming students and scholars. Transformative advances in thinking — and thus their subsequent benefits to society — are rarely made by one or two individuals working in isolation. They require a vibrant and engaged community where the free flow of knowledge and results can stimulate new ideas, as well as access to state-of-the-art facilities and opportunities. This is the heart of Cornell. Nevertheless, our community is also facing many challenges, from questions about the value of a college education to decreased federal funding for research. The Board of Trustees has an important role to play in shaping our future, both internally, by continuing to guide the evolution of the University, and externally, by articulating the benefits of an engaged community of scholars to the broader community. I look forward to the possibility of working with them to advance these issues.