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# Grateful and Prepared, New Graduates Embrace Their Future

JUNE 2, 2023 BY: JANICE ENDRESEN



Cornell SC Johnson College of Business faculty and students on their way to Schoellkopf Field



Cornell University class of 2023 students gathered on the Arts Quad and lined up behind banners for their respective colleges and schools early on May 27, a crisp, sunny, summer morning. Smiles were everywhere and laughter filled the air as they chatted with classmates, professors, and parents, took photos, and waited to begin the procession to Schoellkopf Field for their commencement ceremony. (<https://news.cornell.edu/stories/2023/05/pollack-urges-grads-look-for-comfort-less-and-courage-more>).

Among them were graduates of the three schools that make up the Cornell SC Johnson College of Business (<https://business.cornell.edu/>): the Samuel Curtis Johnson Graduate School of Management (<https://www.johnson.cornell.edu/>), the Charles H. Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management (<https://dyson.cornell.edu/>), and the Peter and Stephanie Nolan School of Hotel Administration (<https://sha.cornell.edu/>). Included were 540 undergraduates (271 from the Nolan School and 269 from the Dyson School); 1,045 master's degree students, including MBAs (887 from the Johnson School, 142 from the Dyson School, and 16 from the Nolan School); and 17 PhD students (6 from the Nolan School, 3 from the Dyson School, and 8 from the Johnson School).

As the procession commenced moving towards Hoh Plaza, students' cheers and shouts of joy filled the air; their excitement was visceral in the bright light of the morning sun.

Every student has a story to tell. Meet a few of them here.



Nolan School classmates Claudia Wood '23 and Melanie Goricanec '23 (photo by Simon Wheeler)

**Claudia Wood '23** carried a pineapple, a symbol of hospitality, and planned to “hold it up high so my mother can spot me!” during commencement.

*What's next?* “I’m going to work at Hilton in Washington, D.C., as a corporate rotational analyst. Hotelie [Jess Pettit](https://sha.cornell.edu/people/jess-petitt/) (https://sha.cornell.edu/people/jess-petitt/), '05 [senior vice president, commercial strategy, insights, and analytics at Hilton] has been my mentor and I interned on his floor. I’m from D.C. and I’m excited to return in this new role. I love the Hotelie community.”

**Melanie Goricanec '23** summed up her experience at Cornell in one word: “Unpredictable:” On the down side, COVID closed down the campus during her second semester. She broke her foot as a freshman. I had lots of opportunities. On the up side, “I served on the Hotel Ezra Cornell board,” she said. “I was asked to be student general manager at Statler and I worked closely with [Arthur Keith](https://business.cornell.edu/hub/2020/02/05/arthur-keith-new-statler-gm/) (https://business.cornell.edu/hub/2020/02/05/arthur-keith-new-statler-gm/).

[’84, Statler Hotel general manager]. I started a new trend in my dorm: Creating, writing, and performing a murder mystery: We wrote it in the fall and rehearsed it in the spring.”

*What’s next?* “Sous chef at Sodexo in Nashville, rotating through operations, R&D, and amphitheater. I love sharing food with people.” Goricanec was honored as a Merrill Presidential Scholar (<https://news.cornell.edu/stories/2023/05/merrill-scholars-honor-mentors-35th-annual-ceremony>), on May 23.

## Dyson School



Dyson School classmates Miné Okoloko '23 and Zaira Paredes '23

**Miné Okoloko '23** focused on business strategy at the Dyson School.

*What’s next?* She’s continuing her Cornell education as an MPS student in behavioral marketing. “I really enjoy marketing. I plan to do a semester abroad, January-August, in Tokyo. I’ve taken some Japanese language classes and I’ll be

taking more this summer.”

**Zaira Paredes '23** focused on business strategy with a minor in real estate at the Dyson School.

*What's next?* “Project engineering in New York City. I’m interested in building construction and during the pandemic I learned AutoCAD. This career opportunity presented itself through the Engineering Career Fair, where someone said ‘Hear me out’ — I did, and I could see it was a good fit.”



Dyson School graduates Nick Stamm '23 and Will Roddy '22, MPS '23, became good friends at Cornell and look forward to staying in touch in New York City.

**Nick Stamm '23** appreciated the freedom Cornell’s curriculum offered. “I learned a lot, I was exposed to a lot of different areas, and I was able to make my own path,” he said. “I had a great time.”

*What's next?* “I’m starting work at an NYC tech startup.”

Will Roddy '22, MPS '23 earned his bachelor's degree in policy analysis and management from the Cornell Jeb E. Brooks School of Public Policy (<https://publicpolicy.cornell.edu/>), and an MPS in applied economics and policy from Dyson. "I completed my bachelor's degree core requirements by my junior year and started on my MPS as an undergraduate; I was able to co-enroll [in both degree programs]."

*What's next?* "I'm going to work in investment banking at Citi in New York."

## Johnson School



David Clark, MBA '23, Stuart Prendergast, MBA '23, and Jorge De Jesus, MBA '23, formed strong bonds as "Team Remote East B" in Johnson's Executive MBA Americas program

**David Clark, MBA '23**, a former U.S. Army airborne officer, plans to focus on scaling up the business and data intelligence company he founded, MyGovGuide.com.

**Stuart Prendergast, MBA '23**, is a senior account with NKSFB, focused on music industry clients.

**Jorge De Jesus MBA '23**, is a senior vice president and deputy general counsel for Evertec, a publicly traded fintech firm.

All three laughed as they described their experience in the Executive MBA Americas (<https://www.johnson.cornell.edu/programs/emba/americas/>). – which was intense, they said. They worked days, they spent evening and nights studying, and they are all parents. So they have similar priorities, understood one another's challenges, and really got to know one another. They helped each other, got frustrated with each other, learned from each other, and joked a lot. When they met each other in person at their first residential session it was wonderful, they said, because they already knew one another so well.



Aniya Knotts, MBA '23, looks forward to teaching at West Point and becoming a mom.

**Aniya Knotts, MBA '23**, a captain in the U.S. Army and a graduate of Johnson's Two-Year MBA (<https://www.johnson.cornell.edu/programs/full-time-mba/two-year-mba/>). program, described her experience at Cornell as empowering. "I

learned a lot from a lot of different people,” she said.

*What’s next?* “I’m going to West Point to teach military leadership in the behavioral science and leadership department. And I’m expecting a son – he’s due in August.”



Alisha Nabila, MBA '23, chose Johnson for its tight-knit community

**Alisha Nabila, MBA '23**, who hails from Indonesia, focused on consulting and finance in Johnson’s Two-Year MBA program. “Before Johnson, I was an auditor, I worked with consultants, and I liked what they do,” she says. She chose Johnson



for its graduates' "great consulting employment rate" and its tight-knit community: "Students reached out to me when I applied, they were so friendly and supportive."

*What's next?* "I will start at EY full time in October. This summer I'll go home to Indonesia and then travel." She'll also check in on her food and beverage company in Indonesia, StreetSnacks.

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