

## Arts and Sciences Changes Leaders

The College of Arts and Sciences, core academic unit of the university, is getting a new leader July 1, who is believed to be its first dean from the physical sciences. Prof. Geoffrey Chester, physics, will replace Prof. Alain Seznec, French literature, who steps back to teaching and research after eight years in the job.

Seznec has been one of the strongest leaders of the college, which has 3,900 of the university's 12,600 undergraduate students. It enrolls half of the graduate and undergraduate students from Cornell's other ten schools and colleges in its courses. He has been a member of the faculty since 1958.

Keith Johnson '56, chairman of the college's advisory council, praised Seznec for launching the Performing Arts Center and for recruiting and retaining top faculty in the Arts and Sciences. "Alain was the most persistent and enthusiastic advocate of [the Arts Center's] construction, and I think it's sort of a monument to him," he says. "He's also been quite adept at raiding other universities for quality teachers, and he's been extremely adept at keeping our quality people here. I think that may have been his strength as dean, and it may explain his popularity with the college's faculty."

Seznec appointed Chester associate dean in 1978, where he has particular responsibility for developing departmental budgets. Chester is an authority on liquid helium, first serving as a visiting professor at the university in 1961. He was director of the Laboratory of Atomic and Solid State Physics from 1968 to 1977.

President Frank Rhodes observed of Chester that he "has earned the respect and trust of the faculty of the college. He had the unanimous support of the search committee."

In the past, physical scientists have been drawn into administrative work at Cornell in directing its many research

centers, going on from there to serve as provost, vice president, or, in the case of Dale Corson of physics, president.

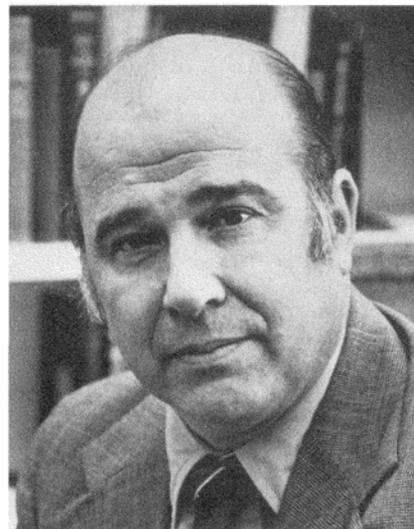
The fact that Chester is the first physical scientist to serve as Arts dean shouldn't be a source of concern, Johnson noted. He added that he also didn't think "there's any significance to the fact that the president of the university [Rhodes, geology] the provost [Robert Barker, biochemistry] and the new dean are all scientists and all of British origin. If anything, I find it an amusing coincidence. Seznec is French. I don't know what's wrong with the Americans; we better get on the ball."

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### *People: Harris to head Africana*

Prof. **Robert Harris**, Africana studies, has been appointed director of the Africana Studies Center. He succeeds Prof. **James Turner**, the first and only director of the center that was founded in 1969. Harris has been a member of the Cornell faculty since 1975. He specializes in Afro-American history and is currently studying the influence of the United Nations on the struggle for racial equality in the United States. Harris was appointed to a five-year term and will be eligible to serve only one additional term as director.

Limiting the number of years the director may serve was one of the many recommendations made by the Board of Trustees in 1984. The trustees also recommended that the Africana center be moved to central campus and incorporated into the College of Arts and Sciences. Africana studies, which currently occupies a former fraternity house on Triphammer Road, is an interdisciplinary unit not part of any college. At the time the report was issued, the Africana



Arts deans Seznec, top, and Chester

studies faculty opposed the trustees' recommendations.

Harris said he wants to strengthen the Africa studies component of the center by bringing graduate students and scholars from Africa to Cornell and by sending Cornell faculty to Africa to conduct research. Turner, who is a sociologist, said he is stepping down to pursue scholarly interests and will continue teaching at Cornell.

### *Other honors*

Two faculty members have been elected to membership in the National Academy of Sciences: Prof. **Robert C. Richardson**, physics, played an important role in the 1971 discovery of the superfluid phases of helium-3 and is currently studying the properties of materials as they approach absolute zero. **Donald L. Turcotte, MAeroE '55**, the Upson professor of engineering, is chairman of the Geological Sciences Department. He has

